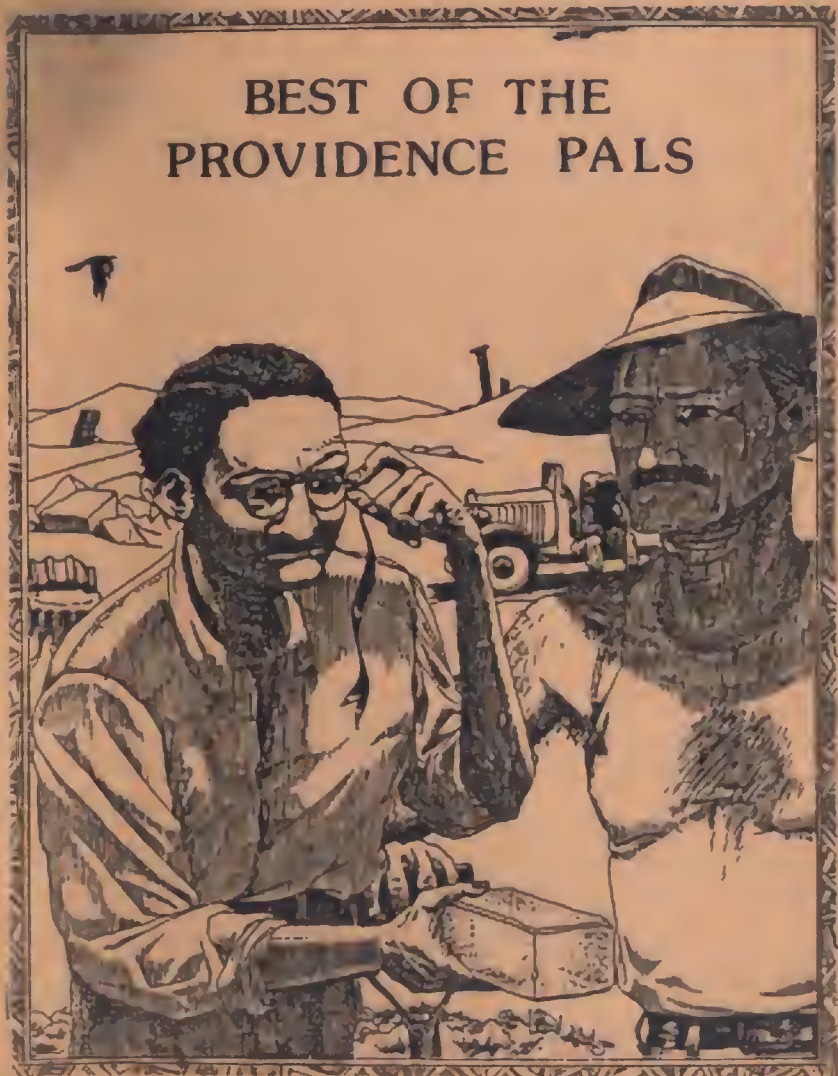


CRYPT OF CTHULHU

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BEST OF THE
PROVIDENCE PALS



CRYPT OF CTHULHU

A Pulp Thriller and Theological Journal

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Debatable and Disturbing: EDITORIAL SHARDS

This is something of a special issue of Crypt of Cthulhu, special even for one of our all-fiction issues. We ordinarily eschew fan fiction to bring you the work of professionals, veterans of Weird Tales and Arkham House. But the stories in this little collection fall somewhere in between, for this is our "Best of the Providence Pals" issue!

Who?, you may be asking. Said Pals were a group of Lovecraft enthusiasts who for a while in the late 70s and early 80s met periodically in Providence, Rhode Island, to visit and revisit the sites of Lovecraft's life and fiction: the "Charles Dexter Ward Mansion," the "Fleur-de-Lis-House," Lovecraft's residences, St. John's Churchyard. The group was able to channel their enthusiasm into various concrete achievements. Marc A. Michaud founded Necronomicon Press. S. T. Joshi edited Lovecraft Studies and wrote and edited several volumes on HPL. Jason Eckhardt illustrated Marc and S. T.'s projects and eventually turned out his own series of Lovecraftian stationery and T-shirts. Donald R. Burleson taught a college course on the Old Gent and wrote a book and several articles on him. Peter H. Cannon also contributed a number of articles and wrote a novella, published last year, about Lovecraft and Frank Belknap Long. Mollie Werba (later Mrs. Burleson) was the official editor of the Esoteric Order of Dagon, an amateur press association. Robert M. Price (yours truly) started Crypt of Cthulhu. Time does not permit the rehearsal of the heroics of other Providence Pals such as Ken Neily and Sam Gafford.

Many of these names will be recognizable to most readers primarily through their scholarly and critical endeavors. So we thought it might be fun to test out Brian Lumley's theory that critics probably cannot write fiction to save their lives. Here are samples of the fictional experiments of six of the Providence Pals. In fairness, it should be noted that S. T. Joshi's "The Recurring Doom" is a piece of juvenilia from 1975 when he was 17 years old. It was first published in Ken Neily's EOD fanzine Lovecraftian Ramblings XV in 1980. Jason Eckhardt's cover illustration of the story also appeared there. Marc A. Michaud's "In the Dead of the Night" appeared in Lovecraftian Ramblings XVI the following year.

"The Last Supper" by Donald R. Burleson and "The Madness out of Space" by Peter Cannon both appeared first in Eldritch Tales (the latter appears here in a somewhat different form). Jason C. Eckhardt's "An Echo of Pipes" appears here for the first time, while my own "Blood Atonement" first appeared in Dayspring number 4 in 1984.

To tell you the truth, "Best of the Providence Pals" was first conceived as a private booklet just for the Pals themselves, but on second thought, the whole thing seemed like too much fun not to share with everyone else. We hope you enjoy it.

The Recurring Doom

By S. T. Joshi

" . . . I did it for the sake of knowledge. . . ."

--H. P. Lovecraft

Never in the history of the world had civilization so closely escaped annihilation as in that period of time over two months ago wherein occurred those incidents in which my friend and colleague Jefferson Coler and I were involved; never in all the years of man's existence had such a shadow of death passed over all humanity, to be cast away only at the last moment; never in recorded history had chance and coincidence so conjoined as nearly to cause man's decimation. My own part in the affair was minor: I was but a pathetic and inconsequential acolyte to Coler, who, by piecing together the scattered notes and fragments he had accumulated, detected and foiled the efforts of those things who ever encroach upon us from outside and from within; and averted--for now--a monstrous and recurring doom which shall hang over men as long as men are.

Yet, as irony would have it, had Coler not saved the world, and had those things then slaughtered us all, it would have been the fault of Coler himself: it was his initial actions which set in motion the aeon-forgotten plots of those things who once ruled the earth but were then expelled, and who in cosmic revenge wish the devastation of the world. Coler is our saviour; but had he not been, he would have been our exterminator.

Jefferson Coler is now four days dead, through utter physical and mental exhaustion, an old man at forty-two. I can now write this document so as to show the world how close it came to unthinkable turmoil, and to show that Professor Coler was not, as he was deemed in life, a madman or an eccentric, but one who, through his own genius, realized and then forfended an outcome of whose proportions it is not pleasant to think.

Mankind is safe--but only for a time.

* * * * *

Coler was an archaeologist whose rivals were few. In actual knowledge he was almost unsurpassed; yet it was his instinct which lifted him above all others, and which allowed him to make startling breakthroughs in many fields then adumbral with misunderstanding. One of his early works, a report on Ancient Civilisations of Divers Polynesian Islands (1925), had earned him both envy and scorn--envy for its scholarship and erudition, and scorn for the several dubious yet seemingly authenticated extrapolations made in it. His research on the volume also awakened an insatiable thirst for things diluvian and arcane; a thirst which in time developed into an obsession for procuring archaic and curious tomes, many times for inconceivably fabulous prices. Who would give such a sum, many asked themselves, for not even an original but a copy of something called Necronomicon, by, indeed, a mad Arab named Alhazred? or again, a work called De Vermis Mysteriis of Lud-

vig Prinn, or Comte d'Erlette's Cultes des Goules, Laurent de Longnez's L'Histoire des Planetes, Jawangi Warangal's Civitates Antiquae Fantasticae? Coler's acquisition of these volumes did much to brand him as one whose talents, though prodigious, were being pathetically wasted on subjects bordering upon the lunatic; and his assiduous learning of ancient tongues and dialects which had evaded the memories of even the best of linguists further gained him a reputation for eccentricity. Fanaticism is rarely productive of good; but, as it turned out, Coler's fanaticism was the very thing that saved our lives.

His reclusiveness, another trait that earned the mockery of many, was thus not innate but gradually acquired through the ostracism resulting from his unique theories. While he was oftentimes the butt of transparent sarcasms by other archaeologists, he himself did not refrain from ridiculing those of his profession for what he called "their vile and pompous blindness at things which they can't explain or understand"; of particular note was the epistolary argument between Coler and Sir Charles Burton concerning the origin and use of those curious statues on Easter Island, published in the British Archaeological Digest. This constant bickering between him and his associates served only to sever more and more their respect for one another; so that in time each cast the gravest doubts as to the other's competency and ability. I, a lifelong friend of Coler's, eventually became the only archaeologist with whom he would consult, for the simple reason that I did not disclaim the views he expressed. I listened to him not simply to humor him, but because I knew that men had yet to gain all the answers to the world and the universe.

Yet above all, Coler was secretive: through what seemed an inherent lack of faith in men, Coler refused to reveal to anyone his thoughts, his involvements, his actions. It might have been that he, through past experience, feared ridicule; yet this cannot totally explain why, in his most recent affair, he deigned not to tell even me of what he was doing or what was to come; he kept almost everything to himself, intermittently throwing out to me vague hints and remarks which could leave me only with my mind's eye peering confusedly into this fog of ominous implications and portents. Coler did not explain everything to me until the very end; only then did I know how close we had come to death; only then did I understand Coler's previously inexplicable manoeuvres.

The events began for me in the summer of 1940. Coler had just returned from an expedition to Arabia, and had asked me to stop in at his manor in Severnford because he wished to show me "a little curiosity which I dug up in the Arabian desert." As I was myself not involved in anything of overwhelming exigency, I came immediately. Inviting me in, he then left to fetch his prize. He returned moments later.

It would be both trite and untrue to say that the thing was then at all significant of terror; it was anomalous only in that it was unfathomable. What it seemed to be was a roughly rectangular glass or crystal box, of a dull viridescent color. The one peculiarity was that the figure had no seam or opening in it; so that if it were indeed a box, then it was a box whose manner of use had yet to be discovered. That it was merely an object of decoration seemed improbable, for it was, by our standards, hardly attractive in any way. Seeing all this, I looked up to Coler, mutely expressing my

apprehension.

"I'm as confused as you are," he said, "not only as to its function but as to its constituents. It does superficially resemble fluorite, and, if it were not so dull, one might think it pure diatopse; but my chemical tests prove that it is neither. It certainly is some sort of crystal, yet it is a crystal which seems to have few or no earthly elements."

"My dear fellow," I cried, "you must show it to the Archaeological Institute!" I was referring to the Royal Archaeological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, "What a find!"

"No, Collins, no," he replied: "my reputation is too precarious. They will think it a hoax or some cleverly planned practical joke on my part. I've been in similar situations before; the result has always been the same." He spoke with a dreary acerbity from which one could glean his remembrance of the past.

"How did you find it, anyway?" I queried.

"That's another curious business! Our party was exploring some strange pillared ruins (possibly, though not certainly, Alhazred's 'fabulous Irem, City of Pillars'), and it happened that, while I was digging somewhere with a trowel, the ground beneath me suddenly gave way, and I plunged down what seemed to be a narrow pit. I fell down some twenty feet, landing finally on another sandy surface under the ground. Now my falling must have unearthed this crystal, for I then saw it lying next to me, still half-buried in the earth. Some of my men, who had seen me fall, threw me a rope, and I climbed out of the pit, bringing this thing up with me."

It was, as he said, curious, but not totally out of the ordinary. When I asked him what he planned to do with the object, he replied:

"I don't know, Collins, I don't know. At present, there is nothing I can do, save somehow to find out its constituents and its purpose."

"One moment, Coler," I suddenly burst out. I had only then remembered some of my own readings in the arcane, which, although not within Coler's level, were not inconsiderable. "Might this not be Blake's Shining Trapezohedron?"

"I thought of that, too, Collins, but I've now dismissed the idea. Remember what Blake says about the Shining Trapezohedron: it is a many-faceted crystal or 'glowing stone' inside an 'open box of yellowish metal.' Now, in addition to the fact that our discovery has no opening, what we have here is simply a crystal box itself, or perhaps a solid block of crystal. Whatever it is, it is not the Shining Trapezohedron."

Coler was staring at the thing as if hypnotized, and my gaze too became fixed on it. Its apparent functionlessness was what made it peculiar, not any inherent quality of the crystal itself. I am tempted to write that it even then gave off a miasma of otherworldly manufacture, and I cannot definitely adduce whether this view is actual or merely born of imperfect memory and subsequent explication. The thing was strange, but really nothing more; terror would come a little later.

Research and publishing of an historical-archaeological report on Roman ruins in Wales kept me almost constantly busy for an entire week after my visit with Coler. Indeed, it was exactly a week later that Coler called me again, saying that there had been a new development concerning his discovery.

I had only concluded my work that morning, and was glad that Coler's summons had come at such an opportune time. Again, I must refrain from adding that any feeling of dread was then overcoming me; for the enigma of the crystal was as yet minute, and in the course of my own activities I had all but forgotten it. It would be the most pathetic of platitudes to say that the importance and significance which I gave it was far short of the mark.

The "new development" of which Coler had spoken was not as radical as I had supposed: its shape and color were still the same, and the only change was that there could be detected in the center of the green object a small glowing, as if some sort of phosphorescent ball had been placed within it. That this had resulted of its own accord was obvious, what with the seamlessness of the thing; and, because we knew not what the purpose of the box itself was, we could hardly have any notion as to the function of this odd glowing. I asked Coler when the glowing had begun, and he replied:

"I first detected it this morning, though it could well have started any time last night. But it is not that which bothers me: it is what we are to make of it."

I could not but agree.

"What does it mean, man," he said, more to himself than to me, "what does it mean? I cannot even begin to hypothesize on it, so outré and senseless does it seem. I can't help feeling, however, that there is more here than meets the eye. . . .

"The answer," he continued, "may well be in one of my books. I've begun looking myself--there's nothing in Prinn--but I still have dozens of volumes to go through."

There could be nothing clearer than that Coler wanted help in his task. Being free of my own activities, I proffered my services, and he assented with an eagerness which told of his relief at not having to ask me himself. In his experience-gained self-sufficiency he had grown loath both of asking favors and of doing them. My suggestion that we begin at once was quickly adopted, and we two retired to his library, where his priceless collection of tomes lay.

Coler had already been some two-thirds of the way through von Junzt's Unaussprechlichen Kulten when I called, and, taking up that book again, advised me to look through any of the other volumes I wished. I had never completely read Alhazred's Necronomicon, and considered that now would be as good a time as any to do so. I took down the handwritten copy which Coler had purchased from an old occultist in Massachusetts, and began its perusal; seating myself in one of the two occasional chairs in the room, in the other of which Coler himself was seated.

How many hours we were in that room reading I have been unable to determine; but the fact that the first time I looked up from Alhazred's volume, I saw through the window that night had fallen, and that the grandfather's clock in the library registered well past 9, proves that no inconsiderable time had elapsed in the course of our task. Coler's despair at discovering not even the vaguest reference to his find in von Junzt was matched by my own discouragement at the apparent uselessness of the Necronomicon. I had managed to get half through the tome, and there could not be discerned in even its allegorical whisperings any obscure allusions to Coler's crystalline receptacle. Alhazred's mentioning of a box which was a

"window to space and time" could be nothing other than a citation of the Shining Trapezohedron, coinciding as it did exactly with the descriptions in both the Blake manuscript and in Prinn's De Vermis Mysteriis. That being the case, it could be of no use to us; although Alhazred's later noting something called "Nyarlathotep's weapon" could have meant anything from those "Druid" stones in Avebury to that mysterious round tower in Billington Woods near Arkham, Massachusetts. Coler, late in the afternoon, had finished the von Junzt and had begun Warangal's Civitates Antiquae Fantasticae, though even that Indian philosopher's work seemed to be as ignorant of the green crystal as Prinn's and Alhazred's had been, so that our disheartenment at finding no clues soon turned to a dread that not a single volume in Coler's library would bring any facts to light. Our exhaustion was as great as our frustration, and Coler, gentleman to the last, told me, at close on 9:30, to stop our work and partake of a late supper. No suggestion could have been more apt.

The next day proved to be more productive, though in ways which we could not yet understand. The morning found me again in Coler's library recommencing my examination of the Alhazred volume, while Coler himself continued to tackle the Warangal tome. Some time afterwards, perhaps an hour before noon, I, resting my eyes from the crabbled and blurred writing, looked at that morning's paper, which was lying haphazardly on the floor next to me. In it was an article which, though small and of apparent inconsequence, proved later to be vastly significant. The article was this:

OCCULTISTS HOLD CLANDESTINE MEETING

Brichester: 2 July 1940. A band of some two dozen occult worshippers, ranging in age from eighteen to over seventy, were seen performing some dark ritual on the top of Sentinel Hill outside Brichester yesterday night, where there are located some primitive Druid megaliths. No sacrifices seem to have been made, but the leader of the flock, an old man of about sixty, who seemed to serve the function of a priest, was heard intoning weird chants which the "congregation" echoed. The whole incident seemed to be of little importance, for the ritual or ceremony lasted scarcely half an hour. This was the first of such meetings in over six months, and officials are fearing a recurrence of the disappearance of various young children which occurred the last time the gathering met, in late December 1939.

It cannot be said that, when I first read the article, I paid any great attention to it. In the quest for ascertaining the origin and function of Coler's crystal, I was hardly about to give much notice to some absurd litany performed by a handful of degenerate, semi-crazed individuals. I remember remarking to myself that the Brichester Herald must truly be desperate for news, if it were lowered to including such trite and ludicrous affairs in its pages.

My subsequent finishing of the Necronomicon two hours later coincided almost exactly with Coler's completion of the huge Warangal tome; the re-

sult, of course, was as before: although both the Necronomicon and Civitates Antiquae Fantasticae contained detailed accounts of Irem, the City of Pillars, there was nothing in either volume which we could relate to the excavated crystal. Our minds were already weary with reading, and Coler's suggestion that we take some lunch was heartily accepted by me.

The phone call came immediately after we had finished. Coler was informed by the operator, when picking up the instrument, that he was receiving a call from Wolverhampton Airport from a man who was a resident, of all places, of Arkham, Massachusetts! Wilmarth, who had probably forgotten Coler's very name, surely could have nothing to do with us, and the reputation for eccentricity and, it must be admitted, rank enmity of his colleagues which was Coler's further created a mystery as to the identity of our transatlantic caller. The enigma was solved, however, immediately upon the utterance of the American's first words.

"Meredith!" Coler jovially exclaimed in reply. "It's been nearly fifteen years since I've heard your voice! Why in the world are you in Tewkesbury? . . . To see me? For what reason? . . . I understand. . . . As a matter of fact, I am, but it has been so discouraging that I'd be glad to give it up and tackle something fresh. . . . We will be there shortly. Good day."

Upon Coler's hanging up the phone, he related to me the gist of the conversation. It seemed that Joseph Meredith, now head of the Archaeology Department at Miskatonic, and one of Coler's few friends, had come here to give Coler an ancient and curious hieroglyphic tract which a Miskatonic expedition to Egypt had recently discovered. Meredith's staff, unable to decipher the evidently millennia-old fragment, had decided to put the thing in Coler's hands, knowing that he was one of the world's foremost authorities on elder tongues. The archaeologist had just arrived here, at Wolverhampton Airport in Tewkesbury, and had asked that Coler come and fetch him and bring him back here so that work might be begun on the text; to which request Coler had agreed.

When we arrived at the airport, we saw Meredith with, not only suitcases, but another small black container which we knew was a special housing case for old parchments, a case which would protect the manuscript from the decimating effects of time and the elements. As we entered the car and drove back to Coler's manor, Meredith explained more about the find.

The trip to various ruins in Egypt had been made only that winter, and, aside from other minor archaeological artifacts, this parchment had been the only significant product. Its being unearthed in a ruin near the town of Kurkur had given it the name of the Kurkur Fragment. Linguists, archaeologists, and antiquarians alike had been baffled as to the language or dialect of its writing; that it was either a modern or archaic dialect of Egyptian had been almost at once ruled out, and, as it might easily have been transported to Egypt from as far a place as India, tests had been made as to whether the document was in either Arabic, Sanscrit, or the dozen modern and obsolete Indian dialects; but the results had all been equally negative, serving only to confirm that it was either penned in a language of unbelievable obscurity, or that it was inexplicably written in code. Meredith himself, remembering Lang's Voynich Manuscript, had put forth the theory that the work might be in a sort of hybrid language, i. e., Sanscrit letters (for this much was obvious from the text) perhaps forming Hittite or Assyrian words. The work on

this hypothesis had only begun, for there seemed to be, considering the unknown origin, almost no end of permutations that could be had. Meredith had then thought of letting Coler scrutinize the tract so that the possibility of its being in some abstruse tongue, known only to Coler and other such specialists, might be explored. This was, then, the reason for Meredith's arrival.

Coler would not stand for Meredith's lodging in an hotel, and offered his own mansion--a multi-roomed stone edifice whose construction might have dated from the sixteenth century, and only a fraction of which was used--as a temporary residence and base of operations. The afternoon was progressing by the time we had returned to Severnford, and Coler's suggestion of an early dinner which would leave the entire evening free for studying the manuscript was accepted by both Meredith and myself.

That evening, however, was important not so much for our working on the Kurkur Fragment as for an incident which made us realize, perhaps for the first time, that we were involved in matters whose scope was far greater than we had originally supposed.

Putting forth the thoroughly justifiable plea of fatigue from his 4,000-mile trip, Meredith retired early that night. We did not fail, however, first to show him Coler's anomalous crystal; indeed, it was Meredith himself who had requested to see it, having heard of the find from one of Coler's party, a Miskatonic graduate student named Craig Phillips. Coler told his colleague all the facts about its discovery, its sudden commencing to glow, and our own inefficacious efforts at trying to enucleate its origin and use. Coler, too, explained that the glowing had definitely grown larger since the morning, the phosphorescent ball inside now approaching a diameter of two and a half inches. Meredith, not unnaturally involved in his own arcanum, seemed to pay Coler only enough attention as might just be within the bounds of courtesy, and then tried to steer Coler's mind back to the new mystery which he had dropped in his lap. This was not a difficult task to perform, considering our double irritation at the total absence of any clues as to the crystal's function and significance.

It must have been close on 11 o'clock when it occurred. Coler had initially given me a part of Meredith's manuscript and had me make certain arrangements of the curious and faded letters which would allow him to break the centuries-old cipher, but after a time stopped me, telling me that he had perhaps discovered the base and method of the text. I had recommenced finding the answer to our other enigma, picking up Laurent de Longnez's comparatively recent *L'Histoire des Planetes* (1792), to see if that contemporary of Sade and La Bretonne had any knowledge of the age-old green thing that had come from Arabia. De Longnez's French was filled with irritating punctuational and literary archaisms that made reading none too easy, so that after a time I found myself bent almost double over the book, perpetually squinting my eyes and following with my head each individual line. Several hours of this had hypnotized me to the book, so much that I all but forgot the presence of Coler at the desk across the room. Only until I heard a sudden shuffling movement close at hand did I emerge from my reverie and, for the first time in hours, look up.

What I saw was another man in the room, not Meredith, nor Coler, but

one whose slovenly attire and facial vacuity told that his origin could be nothing else but that haven of squalid decadence called Lower Brichester.

How the man had gotten in the house became more an enigma than what his object was, for it was now obvious that his steps were leading him straight to the glowing crystal on Coler's desk, and now only yards separated him from his prize.

Coler, miraculously, was so entranced in his studies that he still had no inkling that this intruder was here at all, and only looked up, mutely baffled and disturbed, when I flung myself bodily at the man, half wrestling him to the ground. Either through my underestimation of the degenerate miscreant's strength or through my own unrealized enervation, I found myself soon with my back to the ground, looking up into a visage which now held the image of absolute terror. Seeming now to be possessed of an uncontrollable lunacy, the thief suddenly raised himself to his feet and, disregarding both his bizarre quest and any concern for bodily injury, flung himself headlong through the window of Coler's library. Falling to the ground amidst a frightful shattering of glass, the man got up and ran off into the night.

Too awed at the whole spectacle to speak, I could only stand at the window and regard the curious voleur, who had now stopped running when he saw that he was unpursued. Coler, however, had not been idle; he suddenly came up behind me and, laying a hand on my shoulder, spoke the words:

"Quick, Collins! Follow him! See where he goes!"

"What?" I burst out. "What on earth for?"

"It would take too long to explain now: just follow him, man. It's vital! I've nearly solved the Kurkur Fragment, and Collins, it deals with the very crystal I dug up! Everything is fitting together, everything is making sense. I think I even know why that robber came here. But go now, Collins: follow him, and tell me where he went. Go now!"

Coler would not hear another word of protest nor any demand at explanation, and I could do nothing but carry out his request.

Trailing our erstwhile criminal proved to be of no difficulty, as he had no intimation whatever that anyone would want to watch his movements. He was walking easily now, and the simplicity of my task allowed me to ponder on the several enigmas which had so suddenly formed minutes ago. Paramount was the almost ludicrous audacity which this fellow had demonstrated: what phenomenal idiocy or urgency had impelled him to attempt his criminous act in our very presence, where his chances of success were of such exiguity as to be explained only by resorting to the appellation of lunacy? Then there was the matter of Coler's fragmentary utterances concerning his success in decoding Meredith's ancient tract. What could Coler have meant when he said that everything was now "fitting together"? and how could the Kurkur Fragment, the green crystal, and this unsuccessful try at larceny be in any way related? I think that it was about then that I first began to perceive vaguely that we were dealing with great and appalling matters beyond our ken, involving elder secrets of galactic menace inexplicably joined with incidents in our own midst, the end result of which seemed to form such a devastating implication of doom as might, when correlated and understood, cause the mind to totter on the outermost reaches of Irremediable Insanity.

I had been following the man with only half my mind, ruminating on the mysteries which seemed imminent of solution by Coler. But even now, as

we approached the outskirts of Brichester, I saw that our bucolic brigand could have only one destination: Sentinel Hill, the site of that occult nocturnal ritual of yestereve.

When we reached the hill itself, I felt no surprise at the sight: the congregation that had met almost exactly twenty-four hours ago, for what was taken to be a suggestive if innocuous assembly, was there again, all clustering around the flat, table-like mass of stone that lay on the very summit of the hill, surrounded by a score of carven menhirs whose prodigious age was evident even in near pitch-darkness. Sheltered behind a clump of trees, I saw my shadow timorously approach the others and, when he had reached him who seemed to be the leader of the band, mumble, with head bent low in mortification, a handful of words, arms gesturing plaintively. Upon the man's concluding, the leader, a small, chunky man of sixty, was suddenly seized with a maniac rage, and slapped the erring subordinate in the face again and again, ceasing only when exhaustion overcame him. The brigand, who was almost twice the size of his punisher, seemed to have no notion whatever of retaliation: although he could easily have annihilated his violent castigator, he chose instead to endure the chastisement, seeming to regard the other with an ineffable respect that was as incredible as it was absurd. When finally the affair was concluded, the elderly padrone adjured all the members to depart, then himself left. I saw that the unfortunate young man who had been so severely reprimanded walked alone, the object of ridicule and outright hatred by the others.

When I returned to Coler's manor and reported the incident, he, still working on the Egyptian document, nodded slowly and thoughtfully, as if it had only confirmed his hypothesis on the matter. He refused to tell me anything regarding either the attempt at stealing the crystal or his deciphering of the Kurkur Fragment, saying only that he must be left alone so that he could finish its translation. But here I intervened: seeing Coler's haggard and dishevelled appearance, realizing that he was on the brink of utter physical and mental exhaustion, I refused to allow him to work any more that evening, and bade him get a good night's sleep; Coler was either too weak or too sensible to resist.

There was hardly any indication when I awoke the next morning that that very night would see the culmination and end of the horrific incidents in which we had so accidentally become involved. Realizing, since Coler had already broken the code of the Kurkur Fragment and that only the arduous work of transcribing had to be done, that my presence at his home would be more a hindrance than a help, I decided to pick up the threads of my own archaeological studies. Leafing through my small report, I found that it contained a number of unsubstantiated statements which could only be rectified by referring to contemporary manuscripts, and in the late morning I journeyed down to Oxford and looked through the Bodleian Library collection of ancient documents to find the necessary sources. When I concluded this work it was mid-afternoon, and, since my time was my own, I decided not to return home but to reacquaint myself with an Oxford which I had not seen for well-nigh a dozen years. My particular architectural predilections tend toward the High Gothic, and few places could satisfy my desires better than Oxford. I must have spent hours in examining the buildings and in roaming the countryside, and I

think I can be forgiven for so letting my fancy overcome me, though I often shudder at the thought that I came back to Severnford in what proved to be the very nick of time.

At about 7 I dined in a restaurant in Oxford, and, finally coming to the conclusion that I had wasted enough time in frivolity, made the return trip, reaching home at close on 8:30. Exhausted by my ramblings, I must have dropped off almost immediately afterwards, awaking some forty-five minutes later. For the first time in the day I thought of Coler, the crystal, and Meredith's Kurkur Fragment, and decided to give the man a call to see how far he had progressed.

Curiously, I received no reply, though I let the phone ring several times. Surely, I thought, Coler could not have retired so early; and even if he had, why did Meredith not answer? Had the two gone somewhere, as I had done, on an archaeological mission? or had pleasure spurred their departure, Meredith wishing to catch a brief glimpse of England while he was here? The possibilities were endless, and it was useless for me to speculate haphazardly in this manner: the only way I could solve this absurdly minor enigma was to go personally to Coler's manor.

I cannot say that I was particularly surprised when no one answered either my vehement knocking at the door or my calling out loud of Coler's and Meredith's names. Indeed, I was about to come to the conclusion that the two must have gone somewhere, despite the late hour, when I saw something that, though it did not actually defy this hypothesis, did put a more curious and sinister significance upon the whole affair:

Coler's car was still in his garage.

It was certainly possible that they had gone on foot to wherever they were going, and their absence could well indicate that some accident had befallen either one or both. For a time I considered scouring the countryside in my car for them, but then I became aware of another odd circumstance that almost definitely precluded any innocuous explication of the matter:

Coler's front door was unlocked; and the reason that it was unlocked was that the lock was broken.

This was not Coler's work, nor Meredith's; there also came flooding back to my memory the unsuccessful criminous attempt of the night before, an incident to which Coler had attached a considerable and as yet an unaccountable importance. Something serious was involved, I knew, and I felt also that the consequences of whatever it was were not only overwhelming, but imminent of realization.

I burst through the door and began searching for Coler's presence. The first place I looked was of course the library, and there I found him--on the floor, unconscious, with blood oozing thickly from a head wound which seemed remarkably recent.

Although I was shocked at this abrupt discovery, I remember noticing that the room was, paradoxically, in relative order: no papers were scattered anywhere, no chairs overturned, no books disturbed save those which we had ourselves perused, and only Coler's prostrate form signified that any physical struggle had taken place here. I saw, too, that Meredith's Kurkur Fragment was still on Coler's desk.

My first task was to revive Coler, and this was accomplished with no great difficulty; for though Coler's head wound was ugly, it was not serious.

Only a minute or two after I began my ministrations I heard Coler moan gruffly and shuffle about, trying to get to his feet. When he opened his eyes, he first expressed a startled horror which again reminded me of our bootless miscreant of the preceding night; then, upon recognizing me, he became tranquil, murmuring:

"Oh, it's only you, Collins. Thank God you've come--"

Breaking off suddenly, his face abruptly registered a wide-eyed dread which seemed to hint of the most awesome of horrors, and which allowed Coler to mutter only the words, "Oh, my God!" and then precipitously to arise from the floor and cast frenzied glances all about the room, as if he were looking for something. . . .

Then I noticed that the crystal was gone.

"Collins, they've taken it! they've taken it! Come quickly, man, we must go immediately! If we are too late, Collins. . . ."

Disregarding his injury, he first went to another room and seized a rifle, then urged me to come with him as he made his way out of the house. Trying to ignore what was so affecting Coler, I asked him what in the world had happened to Meredith, and Coler gave me this amazing reply:

"He has gone back to Arkham."

"What!" I cried. "But he arrived here only yesterday! What made him go back so suddenly?"

Flinging at me the day's newspaper, which was lying on an armchair in the living room, Coler snapped, while exiting through the front door:

"The answer is there, Collins; read it on the way."

And read it I did. The article was almost on the last page of the issue, ironically tucked away in a corner, as if it were some sort of filler:

BIZARRE RIVER TRAGEDY

Arkham, Massachusetts, U. S. A.: 3 July 1940. The shores of Devil Reef near Innsmouth and the Miskatonic River were the sites of peculiar deaths yesterday night. A number of citizens of Arkham, including some young students of Miskatonic University, were found murdered while fishing or swimming; their bodies were torn apart as if by great claws, and a noxious fishy smell adhered to them, along with a curious green slime which was so foetid that the bodies could not be approached for several hours. Whether a human agency was involved could not be determined, but officials and various old inhabitants of Arkham and Dunwich have expressed the belief that this event is somehow tied with the hushed-up government intervention at Innsmouth in the winter of 1927-28 and to the terrible holocaust at Dunwich which took place some months afterwards. They also refer to the great floods that occurred in the hills of Vermont in late 1927, the subsequent disappearance of an old folklorist named Akeley, and the resultant madness of Miskatonic instructor of literature Albert N. Wilmarth. How those diverse incidents could have any relation to the recent tragedy was not explained, though it has been noticed that the townspeople of Innsmouth have been unduly restless in the past few days, and that there has been unprecedented activity in the depths of Devil Reef on several occa-

sions. Some lunatics have gone so far as to mumble about the Salem witch trials, which occurred two and a half centuries ago, though it is to be noted that no one has cared to disavow any of these rumors.

Officials are still looking into the matter, while state and federal authorities have again been contacted. . . .

This certainly explained Meredith's return home, although it hardly seemed to have any significance to our own affairs. Still running alongside Coler, with only the moonlight to guide us, I then saw another article which was of interest:

CURIOUS SEA INCIDENT

Papeete, Tahiti: 3 July 1940. Some twenty persons--many of them English and American tourists--were killed yesterday night by so-called "sea monsters," which were said to have come from the sea. Several of the bodies were mutilated beyond recognition, others with limbs amputated and partially eaten. A green trail of slime led from the bodies back to the sea, and the odor of dead fish also prevailed. It is believed that some ordinary sea animals came out of the sea and wreaked the havoc, the claim of "sea monsters" being passed off as the exaggerations of superstitious natives. . . .

Here were two identical incidents, tens of thousands of miles apart. My own readings in the weird could allow of only one answer to those twin disasters, yet the mystery lay in why these things had chosen this especial time to attack. If these two events were unrelated, then it was the most fabulous coincidence ever to come within the scope of my knowledge.

Coler was still rapidly running, and I had trouble in keeping up with him. We had now reached the outskirts of Brichester, but long before this I knew that our eventual destination must be Sentinel Hill. The incredible determination of Coler was what most impressed me: although I knew something of great consequence was involved, I could hardly envision that it was so great as to impel the man into this maniac haste, with, further, the deadly rifle at his side. Could the possession of a mere block of crystal, anomalous and supermundane though it may have been, be of such earth-shaking importance? what awful power and significance lay in its weirdly glowing interior? what implications of future devastation could it hold? That the answer was as titanic as it was complex seemed evident, and I can truthfully say that even the wildest arabesques of my imagination did not encompass what I eventually learned was the truth.

We finally reached Sentinel Hill, and, hiding behind a thick copse of trees, I saw again a sight which had to me become monstrously familiar: the infernal congregation was there again, and this time a few of them carried torches to give the whole scene an unhallowed illumination. They were gathered in a close circle around the flat stone at the top of the hill, those with torches standing while the others knelt. The elderly priest also stood, and walked, his back to us, slowly toward the stone. He then reached out his arms and put something on it.

The crystal now lay in the center of the stone.

We could see even from where we were that the glowing had only grown in size, seeming to be close to twice as large as when I had seen it last. There now fell over all a great and deathly silence, yet in the air there was such a tension and apprehension as might make one think that Nature were holding her breath in the expectation of some ineffably towering cataclysm.

The priest now raised both his hands to the sky in a supplicating gesture. Just as he was about to speak Coler fired his rifle.

The priest fell dead to the ground without uttering.

Silence died as quickly, as the other members of the band now began clamoring at the abrupt interruption of their ceremony and looked about to find its cause. They did not have to look far, for Coler now sprang from his place of concealment and ran toward the hill, gun in hand, urging me to follow.

We were madmen to throw ourselves in the midst of that depraved band of blasphemers, yet necessity of the most terrific sort drove us on. We were two against twenty, but we, too, seemed suddenly filled with a bestial madness that made us claw and tear our way through, Coler intermittently firing his rifle in someone's face or stomach; and when I grabbed the crystal and tucked it under my arm, there came over me an even greater rage at these grotesque perversions of all that is sane and normal, these handfuls of lunatic scoundrels whose desire of absolute decimation was born only of their failure to co-exist with a race who had so surpassed them in mental and spiritual progression that they no longer deserved the appellation of human but became a species apart in their odious and lurid decadence.

I kicked, I scratched, I maimed, and, using my head as a battering ram, thrust my body through the crowd, twisting and writhing away from them as they turned to wrestle the crystal away. I soon found myself in the open, Coler at my side, and we began sprinting away with a velocity we had never before known; and when we turned around to measure the extent of our escape from pursuit, we saw the score of fanatics now a considerable distance behind us, but still giving chase, leaping and tripping over one another, foaming at the mouth in multiple apexes of fury, arms outstretched as if itching not only to win back their other-worldly prize but to rend us apart for having so foiled the consummation of their ritual. But because we also possessed a thankful modicum of insanity, we pressed ourselves on almost beyond the farthest reaches of human capacity, racing through Brichester, TempPhill, and finally to Severnford without allowing ourselves one minor yet irrevocable fatal pause.

But we were not finished yet. When we reached Coler's manor, we stepped not inside but into his car, and drove off to a destination which only he knew. Some minutes later, we pulled to the side of the road and approached what seemed to be an abandoned mine shaft to our right. Coler took the crystal from me and plunged it into the deepest and darkest pit he could find, emitting a heavy sigh of relief after doing so. I recall that though we stayed there for perhaps a full minute, we never heard the crystal reach the bottom.

We had just succeeded in saving mankind--for now.

I had to wait until the next morning to learn the answer. Our exhaustion had reached such lengths that almost immediately upon seating ourselves in some chairs in Coler's home, we dropped off into a heavy, dreamless, and

undisturbed sleep, not waking until it was almost noon. The actions of the preceding night and the long rest had stimulated our appetites, and when our breakfast was prepared we abandoned any pretensions of dignity and attacked the meal like savages. It was some considerable time before we reached anything close to satiation, and when we did Coler led me back to the library, where finally he could reveal to me a truth which he had himself known for less than twenty-four hours.

He began by saying: "You know as well as I, Collins, how we got involved in this business: I accidentally dug up the crystal in Arabia, brought it back with me, tried unsuccessfully to ascertain its use and manufacture, and then noticed how it began glowing, first minutely, then with greater and greater strength. We began looking through my ancient texts to find some sort of reference to the thing, but came up with nothing. Then Meredith came with his Kurkur Fragment from Egypt, and asked me to try to solve it. I did exactly that. It was really very simple: Meredith had himself suggested the answer that it might be a mixture of two languages, which it was--Sanskrit letters forming words roughly akin to these in the R'lyeh Text.

"Now there came those strange meetings on top of Sentinel Hill by those occultists of Brichester. They were up to something, to be sure; but their doing nothing serious the first time seemed to suggest some curious expectancy, and it was of course proved by that incredible effort to rob the crystal two nights ago. It was obvious that they wanted the crystal, but what we could not understand was why.

"I found the answer, as I told you, in the Kurkur Fragment. But before I tell you that, let me show you something else."

He went to his desk and picked up a packet of about a dozen newspaper clippings, all from various London newspapers of the past few days.

He continued, as he handed them to me: "While you were at Oxford, Collins, I telephoned to London and asked to have recent issues of the Times, the Guardian, and the Daily Telegraph brought to me. (I was not fool enough to go myself and leave the crystal unguarded.) Read the articles; their significance is obvious enough."

And it was. I read of curious deaths and disappearances in the Australian desert, in the heights of the Himalayas, and in the frozen wastes of Antarctica; I read of an uprising of dolphins in California; I read of the recommencement of human sacrifices in Manitoba; I read of unheard-of excitement amongst primitive tribes in the depths of the African desert, in Panama, in south France, in the Yucatan peninsula, in southern Louisiana, in Polynesia; I read of ships sighting bizarre objects in the Pacific Ocean, in the north Atlantic, in the Gulf of Mexico. It was incredible, the worse because I sensed what was causing it.

"All across the world," Coler said, "these things have been happening: the incidents in New England and Tahiti were but a part of it. And I could not help but ask myself: why now? What ineffable forces were spurring those things to attack now? Meredith's Kurkur Fragment told me."

Again going to his desk, he took hold of a sheet of paper which I could see was Coler's translation of part of the text. What I read was this:

. . . And the minions of Azathoth first moulded the Earth as a plaything of the gods, who might fashion upon it what they would--

living travesties of the planet's scarce-cooled crust to serve as ultimate signs of the mistake that is Life. But Cthulhu and the Deep Ones came to wrest the earth away, so that they could serve as the gods of the hoary denizens that shambled before there were men; and this pleased not the minions of Azathoth, who by a supreme jest entrapped the feeble god within the waters. Thence did the pre-human worshippers of Cthulhu fashion the Crystal of Zamalashtra from elements spawned on Yuggoth, burying within it the fire from Nyarlathotep. And when the stars are right, the fire will glow; and may this serve as a sign to the worshippers of Cthulhu to deliver the Crystal of Zamalashtra to their entombed god, whereupon he shall break through his shackles and crush the plaything of the gods called Earth. . . .

"Need I say more, Collins? need I say more?"

"You know that Yuggoth is nothing but that recently discovered planet called Pluto. And you know, too, that the orbit of 'Pluto' has been calculated as roughly 248 years. Once every 248 years Yuggoth lines up perfectly so that 'the stars are right'; now is it not obvious what has happened?"

"I dug up the crystal in that exact 248th year!"

"Think of what a phenomenal coincidence that was! What an unbelievable stroke of bad luck that I dug it up at the exact time when Cthulhu could be freed from his orison! The glowing confirmed it.

"But why, then, was Cthulhu not released aeons ago? Why has the earth not been crushed? What must have happened was that the crystal was lost before 'the stars were right,' and because of this Cthulhu and his minions could never completely escape their watery tombs! All they could do was to make random and ineffectual attacks on men, as the Johansen narrative and the Wilmarth manuscript prove. Without the crystal, it would all be futile.

"Yet the worshippers seem somehow to know when the 'stars are right,' and as a result their activities, and the activities of Cthulhu's spawn, suddenly increase. This most recent attempt proves it; yet this time, because they knew that the crystal had now been rediscovered, their anxiety was a thousandfold greater: for the first time in millennia, they had a chance finally to annihilate the world! Why else did one of the worshippers try to rob the crystal in our very presence? why else, when that failed, did they resort to physical violence? why else did they so madly try to get back the crystal when we had taken it from them? why else did those incidents occur all over the planet?"

"Then, too, Collins, think of this: this is 1940; we know that this is the period when the 'stars are right'; then 248 years ago, the stars must again have been right. And what is 248 years from this date? Is it not 1692, the time of the Salem witch trials? Is there any other explanation for the sudden activity of the witches? Then, as now, they knew it was time; but the crystal was lost, and they could do nothing about it. They had to be content at merely intensifying their rituals, to such an extent that they were caught and killed. But it was all useless: they could do nothing without the crystal.

"If it had not been for me, we would not have gone through what we have; yet think of our marvelous good fortune that Meredith dropped in our laps

the very thing we needed to counteract all that had happened! There has never been a time when coincidence has been so devastating, when chance so entered into the composition of events, when sheer accident first threatened, then saved our lives.

"We need not worry about the Crystal of Zamalashtra for another 248 years: by now, the stars have surely moved their alignment, and the crystal has again become powerless. We shall both be dead before the proper time next comes: let us hope that no idiot stumbles upon the crystal as I did, or if someone does, that he has the sense to leave it in its place. I don't see how we can ever escape the recurring doom of this crystal; and I don't see how in time Cthulhu will not escape his prison. Uncontrolled curiosity has ever been our worst enemy."

Jefferson Coler died thirty-six days later, having saved the world yet having left a legacy of eternal dread that seems destined eventually to overcome mankind. The preservation of this document is vital to the preservation of our race: if men cast doubts as to its veracity, then they will pay the consequences of their folly.

Really, it would be the most priceless irony.

Written: June-July 1975

Minor Polishing: 27 June 1979

Afterword: The major change made in the text was the alteration of the quotation from the "Kurkur Fragment": in the original text the quotation was so Derlethian that I could not endure to let it stand; so I rewrote it in a rather makeshift fashion, forgetting that the rest of the text was already so Derlethian and un-Lovecraftian that such an alteration would make little difference.

--STJ

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The Last Supper

By Donald R. Burleson

The place had a hellish appearance on a night like this. My heart was quickened both by the phantasmal landscape and by the prospect of the awesomely significant and darkly appropriate deed which lay ahead. This was Prescott Village Burial Ground--one of those ancient and obscure New England graveyards of which no aesthetically sensitive ghoul could fail to be fond, lying as it did on a rutted and little-travelled road, with a weed-banked and sombre-looking river flowing sluggishly behind the backmost stone fence, and with nothing on either side save untenanted and dreary stretches of rocky terrain.

The graveyard itself was a ghoul's delight, extending a considerable distance back from the gate by the road, and from the rickety wooden shack used by the night watchman--back over sable undulations of sparsely grass-covered ground spotted at close intervals by tombstones which were at first the markers of relatively recent interments, but which became, as one progressed toward the back, older and more ill-preserved, until in a dark corner farthest removed from the road the stones became those black slate relics which marked, with their archaic inscriptions and ponderous carvings, the slumbering-places of the town's early settlers.

This most ancient corner was to me artistically the most pleasing, especially with a hazy sky above, a sky in which a yellow moon festered in a sickly diffusion of pale light above the mound-hovering willows, and especially with a faintly sighing wind which stirred the trees into a slight but charming animation. But quite apart from such aesthetic considerations, I must confess that the newer portions of this quaint necropolis were of more direct and practical meaning to me, because in the immemorial backmost graves whose slate markers bore inscriptions belonging to the eighteenth century, there was now nothing of which a questing ghoul could make a morsel. The nearer and more recent graves had indeed known defilement not only by myself but by a number of my companions of kindred appetite.

It was because of the untimely death of one of those nocturnal practitioners of profanation, in fact, that my surviving friends and I had come here on this special night, had come for uncommon feastings. Ghouls we all were, with such an unholy kinship of sympathetic understanding that we had never even discussed the particular night on which we must gather in solemn conclave--we had simply known, and had come. We were unseen, but we were present.

The only visible motion in all this gloomy scene was the bobbing of the light as the venerable night watchman made his rounds, shuffling phlegmatically along the paths among the graves and taking copious pulls at the bottle which he kept, we well knew, close at hand. We watched in morbid amusement from our various dark hiding-places--here behind a large gnarled oak, there behind an especially broad slab, there again in the shadow of a mound, everywhere concealment was offered. Drawing occasionally into deeper shadow as the light swung near, we watched the perambulating figure, watched even as he stepped past the very grave whose compelling interest had drawn

us together.

This was the grave of Rowley Ames, whom we had all known and revered over many years of forbidden pleasure-taking--Rowley Ames, whose virtuosic command of the art of ghoulery my companions and I could only regard with profound respect and, in truth, genuine awe. He had been the Master, and a young person of necrophagous inclination could do no better than to study at the side of this inspiring and inspired nocturnal lurker, observing and imitating him as he deliberated upon the time and place of his conquest, exhumed some carefully chosen subject from the charnel earth, and spent the next hour immersed in unhallowed rending and gnawing as only a truly gifted artist might.

I had learned much from him myself, and I was here tonight, as were my colleagues, to pay grateful last respects--not the insipid "last respects" of his idiotically conventional funeral weeks before, but the one single, special tribute that we could best lavish upon him. We had all understood from the outset, naturally, that the unique tribute to be paid to Rowley Ames must consist of our gathering at his grave for one wholly remarkable feast: the eating of his own long monstrously-nourished carcass.

Of course it would be a symbolic act; there were fully twelve of us, the remainder of a corpse-devouring coven minus its erstwhile leader, and for each of us his body, especially wasted as it was by his final illness, would provide only a token ingestion--but it would be enough, and it would be, we felt, the way he would have wanted to be remembered. We had waited, by common tacit understanding, several weeks for a proper putrescence, and now it was time. "Only the man of intellect and judgment," the gastronome Brillat-Savarin has assured us, "knows how to eat."

I watched with some impatience from my point of concealment, as I knew the others were watching, while the shuffling lantern-bearer completed his rounds and returned to the decrepit shack by the front gate. Before long he had collapsed into the usual alcoholic stupor, and we emerged from the shadows to get on with our affair.

Under a pallid moon we gathered at the grave of Rowley Ames and exchanged silent but knowing glances. The grave was situated not, of course, in the backmost archaic corner which had so appealed to his sense of aesthetic charm, but rather in the newer section amidst actual former recipients of his nocturnal attentions. Indeed, it was ironic that the two graves flanking his own were graves which, as it happened, his hands and teeth had once defiled. And now it was his turn--we had come to pay him the ultimate tribute.

Words can hardly convey the eagerness, the titillation, the sense of reverential awe with which we delved into the foul earth, turning an occasional furtive eye over the shoulder to see that we were unobserved, or indulging in an occasional appreciative glance at the wan moonlit sky forming, with the phantasmal willows overhanging mossy stones, so ghastly a setting for our anticipated deed. We fairly drooled in that anticipation, our mouths working and moving as if already busy at delectable subterranean pleasures. As we worked feverishly to uncover his coffin, my uppermost thought was sometimes my respect for my old Master and sometimes simply the gustatory ecstasy that was to come with the devouring of one who himself had fed upon countless upheaved boxes of carrion delight. And in the midst of such mus-

ings I felt my hand reach a hard surface through the clammy soil, and knew that the feast was to commence forthwith.

Wheezing and panting with the exertion, we lifted the coffin up onto level ground and gathered about it in a circle of anxious faces. There in that charnel scene of spectral, sickly moon, morbid landscape, and sighing night wind, we were gathered, his faithful students of unspeakable arts, ready to behold his miasmal remains, to admire, to partake. We mouthed certain blasphemous litanies appropriate to the ceremoniousness of the occasion, and pried open the casket.

It took a few seconds to understand what we were seeing. By what unthinkable process I do not know--but by some inconceivable organic process, he lived! He lived! Rowley Ames was animate, stirring--though flaggingly, as if he were now dying anew.

But it was not this fact, in itself, that sent us precipitately scattering in revulsion and dismay--not the mere fact of his odd reanimation and the sardonic, hollow laugh with which he greeted us as the coffin lid was raised. We might have been glad, on the contrary, to experience such unanticipated, unimaginable reunion with our Master--certainly our reaction would not normally have been to disperse headlong into the night and leave the scene at the grave site which a reporter described for the newspaper with so much disgust the following day.

No--what seemed insupportable to us, rather, was the fact that the consummate ghoul Rowley Ames lay there in his coffin with a hideously bloated belly but with most of the rest of the sinewy, wormy mass of his body loathsome gnawed away. The wretch had waited, too, though not quite so long as we, and, writhing into queer vivification in his coffin, had eaten his own putrid flesh.

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An Echo of Pipes

By Jason Eckhardt

The woods shifted above and around Kris as he walked through them; yellow to green to dark green, their canopies veined with black branches. The grass was soft under his feet, where it wasn't hidden beneath countless layers of leaves, and he was glad for having left his shoes at home. Beyond the leaf-pennants overhead, infrequent clouds passed, huge and swelling and shining, and birds chattered, unseen. A lone leaf flirted in front of him on its descent to the ground, and he paused to watch it fall.

He was far into the woods but, though he had left the path, was unconcerned about finding his way back. He knew, regardless of the many turns and explorations he made, that the route home would be damnably easy to find; yet he could still hope. Echoing quietly in his mind were irritating reminders--"The woods end at Tower Road--they only extend so far, there are only two ponds in them, the path leads away to the right, beyond the boulders"--all these things and countless other intimacies of the forest he knew, but he kept to his determination. He would get lost in these woods, he would. Once, in a blizzard one December, the path had dimmed to nothing in the snow, the trees had stood, rank on rank, identical, and he had lost his way, reveling in the omniscience of the snow and the quiet it brought, and the illusion of endless hills and hollows of trees. Soon, however, familiarity returned; first a stand of birch, almost invisible in the downfall, then a huddle of boulders, and soon the entire forest regrouped around him, suddenly dull in its precise arrangement. He trudged home that day, saddened and wearied by the presence of well-known and often-traveled roads and paths.

But this day was right, Kris knew. He wouldn't need the curtain of snow today, nor dusk, for the presence of the forest was huge upon him, and he could hear a sound as of multitudes cheering in the swaying of bright trees, for miles and miles. He'd conquer that dullness, for he recognized it as within himself. There was nothing dull in the woods themselves, and only association made them seem that way. The most important thing was to relax, as he had, and to let the rolling hills and his feet take him where habit and reason could not. And, like currents beneath a glittering sea, the land was taking him.

The last familiar thing he had seen had been a huge, flat, lichen-spotted rock he called "the Wolf's Seat," even though there had not been wolves in the area for many years; the name just seemed to fit. Having passed it only minutes before, he decided to walk back and rest on it for a minute or two. However, after topping a familiar-looking rise and surveying the hollow before him, he couldn't see it. At first doubting the very familiarity he had wished to lose, he ran to the opposite ridge, thinking he hadn't gone back far enough. But the rock wasn't there either. At the hollow's bottom were a stand of elm, some stunted blueberry bushes, and a still puddle; nothing more. He ran back to the other ridge and looked beyond it at the long slope, ending in a stream he had leapt only minutes before. It was familiar, but only from the recent past, and he realized, as he ran to the stream, that he had beaten the memories. He was lost.

The stream was far behind him, in what direction he neither knew nor cared. On every hand rose trees, spreading into brilliance above, fading into uniform green on the hills in the hazy distance. The forest flooded his senses in a total seduction to which he surrendered himself; he smelled the scents of leaves spread in the sun, the damp ground, and strangely alluring pollens, tinged with omnipresent decay; to his ears came myriad choruses of crescendo and retreat in the forest ceiling overhead; and color vied with color in the brilliance all around him--sullen greys of boulders, yellow and green and black, and infinite shades between them, flashing from the trees; and beyond everything loomed the almost twilight-blue of the limitless heavens, electric and alive. Here, nature was in full festival, and Kris felt more alive by its very presence.

Once, the land dipped steeply and rose even more so, and Kris climbed the slope to a thinly-wooded crest. Standing straight with his hands on his hips and breathing deeply from the effort of climbing, he scanned the tree-tops. His breathing slowed to almost nothing and he felt his gaze drawn deeply into the spaces around him; for look as he might, he could not see an end to the wilderness around him, in any direction. He shaded his eyes and the smile slipped from his face; he couldn't see any houses, nor any regular breaks in the trees, as of roads, not even the steeple of the white church in town, which he knew to be visible from his house, across the woods from it. He marveled at the trick geography had played on him, in hiding all traces of man, and tried to guess in what direction the church would lie, if he could see it. However, even this seemed futile, for the arrangement of hills resembled nothing he remembered seeing in the area. Looking to the sun gained him only frustration, for it burned noncommittally in the heavens' center--a Summer noon. Kris guessed that he was headed North, but couldn't be sure of this, either, because looking up from the promontory made his head swim, as though he would fall endlessly over the earth, and he could get no bearing on the horizon. And when he started to descend, his anger was complete; for in his confusion, he couldn't remember which side of the hill he had climbed. Randomly choosing a side, he left the summit quickly. The sky had been too overwhelming there, and had only served to make him dizzy and confused.

He walked onward, but his spirit was dampened by his failure to orient himself. The woods now pressed a little too insistently on him, the trees becoming monotonous in their sheer numbers and the silence too complete. The wind had died, he realized suddenly, but he could not recall when. Surely it was blowing when he was on the hilltop, for he remembered its buffeting him there. The quiet drew his thoughts out of his anger, just as the sky tugged at his gaze, and he felt again a returning peace. It was changed, however, from his earlier impression. With the stilling of the wind had come a tranquillity and a solemnity which sharply contrasted with the trees' former festive attitude. Kris was standing very still now, and could hear only a single cicada, singing softly from the trees to his right. He looked intently around him, as expectant as the forest seemed to be, and noted the thinning of the trees ahead and to his right. He walked slowly, unconsciously quieting his steps over the leaves and twigs and stones. He had just discerned something peculiar up ahead, when he felt the cushion of moss under his hesitant feet, and he looked down at it. Reassured that it was just moss, he had

started to raise his eyes when he saw prints in the soft growth. He knelt down and inspected them; the prints were sharp and deep, and had the tell-tale cleft of a grazing animal. Kris searched his memory for reports of deer in the area, but couldn't recall any. Still, that didn't mean much, considering the strange area he was in, and the difference between this print and that of a deer. Not only was the print itself unlike a deer's, but the arrangement struck him as peculiar. The grouping of prints was unlike any he had seen either in books or in the wild, although the print itself seemed vaguely familiar. He puzzled over it for a few seconds more, and then rose and walked toward the white objects in the clearing.

Had his feeling of strangeness about the area not been complete, his inspection of the clearing would have completed it. The white shapes turned out to be stone, unpolished marble that reminded Kris of century-old grave-stones in the cemetery in town, and they were carved and some had weathered hints of writing on them. They appeared, at first glance, to have no order; but Kris walked to the right of the clearing and looked again, and found them to be scattered from one central mound of stones, as though a building had once stood there and had thrown the carved blocks around it in collapsing. Looking again at the tumbled blocks, he was sure of it, for the patterns on them could easily be connected from one stone to another, several feet away. The central group of stones disclosed that the building must have been circular, and the bases of pillars could be discerned from the rest. Whatever kind of edifice it once was, that had been long ago. Most of the blocks were half-buried, grass growing from splits in them; lichens brightly spotted their every surface. Kris was sure that no one had seen the ruin in a long time, perhaps since its destruction, for he could recall no mention of such a thing from any person or source in town. Certainly, a structure such as this would have been big news in a town as small as his, considering the ancient aspect of it. The mystery fascinated, yet frustrated him; he was somehow angry with himself for not knowing more answers. The very writing on the stones was frustrating, for while some letters were familiar, others completely baffled him. Tiring of the confusion, he walked across the clearing to a rock outcropping and lay down to rest, shielding his eyes from the sun with his arm.

He opened his eyes and sat up, surveying the clearing. He was a little groggy and hoped that he hadn't slept; without any way to tell time, he could not be sure about the lateness of the day. The sun, however, had moved behind some branches and no longer shone in his eyes, and he thought it wise to try to find his way again. As he stretched and brushed leaves from his arms, he tried to remember what had awakened him. He remembered only that something from the outer world had penetrated his resting, something like a warning or premonition of an impending event of importance, and even as he wondered, he noticed that the woods had become absolutely quiet. Although they had been still before, they felt now as if there had never been life, or wind, or sound in them. He sat back down on the warm stone, watching as intently as the skies beyond the trees seemed to be.

For a few endless minutes, the world stayed absolutely still, and then two things happened, almost simultaneously. The wind returned, gently at first, then swelling majestically, and Kris, looking around at the animated trees, noticed something new in the darkness across the clearing, beyond

the ruins.

Almost invisible in the surrounding greenery was a face. It was a bearded man, as far as Kris could tell, its eyes dark and trained towards him, although the changing shadows made it difficult to discern details. A surge of the wind cleared the shadows from the face for a moment, and Kris was stunned by the expression on it. It was not a frightening expression, even though that might have been less of a shock. Rather, it was a mood of tranquillity and confidence that was deeper than any expression on any other face he'd seen. The intensity of it so hit Kris that he felt himself drawn into it, relaxing from the first shock of seeing it and forgetting all else. He might have thought he was being hypnotized, but he still heard his thoughts running in his head, even noting the details of the face itself, mostly the large, tilted, placid eyes. He might have kept gazing at the face, except that the wind turned and the shadows slipped back over it. Kris blinked and looked around, as if to find people watching him, but he was alone. No, that wasn't entirely true; the woods were there. He shook his head at his not noticing before: there was a consciousness in the shining wilderness around him, a soul that was older than mankind and complete without him, but there if one looked for it. Its presence pervaded everything in sight; a quiet exuberance and victoriousness in the bright leaves, the fallow grass, the sullen rocks and the ponderously swaying tree-trunks, and Kris ached to be part of it. There must be a compromise between man and nature. At that moment, he was pulled from his thoughts by movement in the far trees. Between two ancient, twisted trunks, stray sunlight had sifted down, held as if by amber in the dusty air. A figure trotted through the bars of light--it was there and then gone, but in that moment Kris recognized it as the owner of the strange face, running half-naked in the soft light. He ran awkwardly, and Kris was puzzled that the man wore dark pants and narrow boots, but no shirt. Kris walked carefully to the arch between the trees, but the figure was long gone. A cricket or cicada piped in the columned shade, and Kris turned to find his way home.

He remembered the point where he had come into the clearing, but little else. The sun was now noticeably lowering into the west and Kris decided that his way led to the south, although even this detail was mostly unconscious. His conscious thoughts were taken with contemplating the scenery around him. In and out of the slanting, yellow light he wandered, realizing that, ironically, now that he no longer cared about it, the path was plain to him and already under his feet, natural to his direction. It was leading home and thus was one less thing to distract him from admiring the landscape settling down for the approaching dusk. He'd keep to the path, watching the woods through which he passed on his way, content with his place therein.

On his way, he ascended a rise, taking in the tranquil panorama around. Whether it was the same hill he had climbed before, he couldn't tell, although he doubted it; for due west, beyond the forested hills and occasional houses, all bright in the reddening sunlight, the church was plainly visible, the white blade of its steeple thrust coldly into the sky.

Kris knew that he would probably never find the ruins again. Still, he didn't care, for he felt that they and the naked figure that lived among them shouldn't be frightened away. That the creature had indeed been totally naked

(continued on page 31)

In the Dead of the Night

By Marc A. Michaud

. . . now he wondered whether providence mightn't have had a hand in it all--he liked the word "providence" because he thought it a respectable, New Englishish way to avoid the word "God," which was altogether too personal and . . . intrusive, sort of.

--William F. Buckley, Jr.

When I first met Sheila, I fell in love with her immediately. She was visiting Providence for a foreign languages conference at Brown University, and, since I worked at Brown, naturally I was there to play my small, though integral, role of aiding visitors in finding places to eat as well as places to park. I was standing to the front of Sayles Hall when she approached me, asking if I knew the way to a particular restaurant.

"Why, yes." 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. . . .

"Well?" I was embarrassed to find myself standing there for what seemed like hours staring at a blue-eyed blonde, and, judging from her accent, most likely from the Midwest. "Is it far from here? A friend of mine" --already I was hoping that the friend was not male--"who used to live here told me about it."

"Uh, what you should do . . ." damn it, Jim, think quick, she's beautiful, don't give her such easy directions ". . . are you here alone?" Oh my god, now you've done it, she's just going to walk away.

"As a matter of fact, I am. Now to get to the restaurant, I?"

"How about, and please don't think that I'm being forward . . ." she's smiling, Jim ole' boy, come on, get those words out "can I take you there myself, there . . . to the restaurant, I mean?" Jim, can't you ever speak to a woman without being totally incoherent?

"I'd be pleased to be shown around town by someone who obviously knows it so well." Sarcasm. But with a smile--I could tell that she was also attracted to me. My guess would become fact in a few, short hours.

* * *

I stop and think. I look around the room, at the ashtray overflowing with cigarette butts, at the smoke from a freshly lit cigarette leave my lungs and circulate throughout the room (aided by a small fan), and at Chad, sitting and playing in the corner. He's three years old now, happy, and unconcerned with his father sitting at the typewriter, smoking himself to death. The grey smoke jumping from the tip of the cigarette, the blue smoke running from my mouth. If only I had stayed the shy and awkward young man who spoke incoherently to women, then I might be happy, and not the father of a bastard son. Chad rolls a toy metal truck and it hits the base of my chair. Ah yes, and then there's Sheila.

* * *

We were sitting in one of Providence's more expensive restaurants, nurturing drinks before dinner. "Are you married?" I thought the question rather abrupt, but was smart enough to play along with her.

"No, are you?" She smiled, and replied that she wasn't. Seduction was taking place, and this time--unlike other occasions--I caught on early enough not to let her slip through my fingers. Allowing dinner to continue, I tried to find out as much about her as I could. Born same year as me, Omaha, Nebraska. Family moved to Chicago while in high school. Studied at North-eastern for five years, receiving both BA and MA. Now teaches at small state university in Illinois. Again, not married, and more importantly, not attached to anyone. Very classy. No relatives, mother and father killed in car crash while in college. In Providence for another week. A lot could happen in a week.

"And what about you?" I explained that I was killing time working at the university until I sold my first novel. Enjoying life and all that, she seemed impressed with my non-caring attitude towards where I would be in ten years' time--Jim, you know that this is all horscrap, you want to be a full-time writer ten years from now, but if it impresses her, what the hell, she'll be here for only a week--and told me that she wanted to continue this conversation. "How about," she added, "if we talk some more at your place? It's not far, is it?"

"Nothing in Providence is far." An hour later we were in bed together, and one very enjoyable week was beginning. I needn't elaborate on what happened from here but just to say that this little blonde and I became quite attached to each other in the coming days. She practically lived with me those six-and-one-half days that she was here, and by the fourth day, I began to dread Sheila's departure, knowing very well that she had to leave and we mightn't ever see each other again. It was during those last couple of days that phrases such as "if you ever happen to be in Providence . . ." and "if you ever happen to be in Illinois . . ." became little jokes to us, both of us realizing that any future meeting would have to be planned.

The end of the week came, and we were both ready to face separation. Both Sheila and I had been through enough mini-affairs to know that it wouldn't be long before we both had found new partners. There always seemed to be one waiting around the corner, or at least this was true with me (the idea that no relationship lasted long had come to me years before). I helped her carry her luggage to the rented car late Saturday afternoon and we bade each other a fond farewell. "Take care" she said with a half-smile and sadness in her eyes.

"Au revoir, mon cher." I went back into my apartment to see if there were any new cracks in the walls.

* * *

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Now cut that out. At the moment, Chad is sitting on my lap, trying to play with the typewriter as I write. Can't you see that Daddy is having enough trouble putting this down on paper without . . . no, no, you just wouldn't understand, would you? Just put him back down on the floor, Jim, and don't get angry--Chad's never done anything to you, has he?

I must correct myself, reader, for it was not until the morning after Sheila had left that I realized that I was in love with her, not, as I said, when I first met her.

* * *

The only thing which might have set off my being very depressed on that

Saturday morning would be if it had been raining, or too heavily overcast. Fortunately, the sun was shining and the sky was blue; a few scattered clouds helped to accentuate the blueness of the sky more than to detract from the beautiful weather. I opened my front door and had that day's copy of the Journal-Bulletin waiting for me, as was the case every morning. The usual headlines were there: "Mayor Continues Battles with City Council," "Senator Charged with Bribery." The corruption within Rhode Island politics seemed always to be present, but no one was ever willing to do anything about it (perhaps the fact that the courts were also corrupt helped in this matter).

And then at the bottom of the front page a headline caught my attention: "East Side Hit-and-Run Takes Woman's Life." Always a sucker for sensationalism, I read on: "Late yesterday at the corner of Angell and Prospect Street, a woman visiting from out of state was hit by an unknown driver while driving her car across the intersection." Damn idiots. "Police say that the unidentified car ran through a red light, smashing into the driver's side of a car operated by Sheila--" Jesus Christ, it can't be "--a college teacher visiting Providence for the Foreign Languages Conference held at Brown University this past week. Hospital sources stated that" Jim, this can't be true "no living relatives and are currently attempting to contact officials at the Illinois university where she taught." Damn damn damn. "Police are currently investigating the accident but state they have no clues as to the identity of the hit-and-run driver at the moment."

Even if I had been depressed by waking up alone that morning, all thoughts of loneliness would have been quickly replaced by grief and panic. I picked up the phone and called the police, "Ah, yes, hello," get the words out, "about that hit-and-run accident, the woman killed was . . ." What do I call her? That's it, "a friend of mine. I just read about it in the paper. Uh, did they catch the bastard yet?" Take it easy, Jim, easy, easy.

I next found myself at the city morgue, identifying the body. Sheila was as beautiful as ever, with the bruise to her head--the damn bruise that killed her--hardly noticeable beneath her blonde hair. The rest of her was unharmed. For the first time in a long time I cried, and it was then I realized that perhaps I was in love with this woman.

This beautiful woman.

This beautiful, dead, woman.

"Yes, it's her, it's her." I left the coldness of the room after saying goodbye to Sheila the second time in two days--this time it was for good. Thanks to some idiot still out on the streets.

* * *

"Daddy, daddy!" Chad was calling me from his room where I had just put him to bed an hour before. You need a mother for your son, Jim, you realize that, don't you? He had been crying. His ordinarily light complexion showed red circles where his cheeks had once been, and tears continued to trickle over his face.

"What is it?" I knew what it was, since he regularly woke up this way every few days, but the question needed repeating. Whether he was three or thirty, a bad dream always needed comforting.

"A bad dream . . . you were hurtin' mommy . . ." he was gasping for his breath by this time "you won't hurt mommy, will you?"

"No, no, mommy is fine." If I only knew where his mommy was . . .

Jim, if you knew where his mommy was, things might be different . . . why he kept dreaming that his mother was in the other room, I'll never know . . . this must just be another way of her getting back at you.

He cried so much that I thought the blue from his eyes might start running down his face also.

* * *

And then there were my bad dreams . . .

I went back to work the following Monday. After all, Sheila was only a "friend," or, at least, that's what I wanted everyone to think. She's dead, Jim, she's dead. No use losing part of your life over it, now is there? After work today you'll just go home, as you always do, eat dinner, sit in front of the TV, start drinking early, and, if you're lucky, you'll pass out. A few more days of that and you'll get over it, won't you? Oh yes, my bad dreams. Only they weren't so bad, or so I thought.

I woke up in my easy chair, where indeed I had passed out. The bottle of Chivas was sitting there on the table in front of me where I last put it down. Getting up, I stumbled down the hallway, into my bedroom. From the dim light coming through the open window, I could see Sheila there waiting for me. I undressed, and, after some struggle, made it into bed, where Sheila and I made love. Jim, you're amazing . . . even when you're drunk. I went back to sleep as Sheila turned over on her side.

The next morning I found myself tangled in the sheets, my arm around the extra pillow, I don't know if I was more relieved or disappointed that Sheila wasn't there; I knew immediately that it had been only a dream, but still it bothered me that if I were to dream about Sheila, that it would be less about her than about sex. If I were really in love with her, wouldn't my dreams be like the ones in the movies? Sheila and I running through a field towards each other in slow motion and all that. Sheila and I floating down a river in a swan-boat, arms around each other. Yes, the river Styx. Don't worry about it, don't worry about it, you know you love her, even if she is dead.

* * *

What was her name? What was her name? She was the one who got me into all this trouble with Chad, she was the one . . . but of course I was the one who was truly at fault, I can't forget that. Still she couldn't understand why I was so upset when I found out about Chad. She said that when I found out about him it was as if I'd seen a ghost. Of course, she was only in college; little did she know how unwanted a baby Chad was.

* * *

The dreams continued and while I realized that there was something perverse about even having them, deep down inside I enjoyed them while they lasted. I pretty much kept to myself, going straight home after work, usually drinking a bit after dinner. If you don't drink tonight, Jim, maybe Sheila won't come back for an encore performance. The single's bars which I frequented when first arriving in Providence didn't attract me any longer; after all, I had my little lady to go home to, even if she was only a dream. And while dreams are normally frustrating, these were extremely satisfying.

And then they stopped. It was the end of the summer, and school was about to begin. She stopped coming. Sheila no longer came to me in my dreams. Just as quickly as they had started, my sex dreams, my Sheila

dreams stopped. One week had passed. Another. Again, Sheila had left me. This time the third, but by now I was getting used to her leaving and didn't feel so horrible that the dreams had stopped. You must be just getting over her, Jim, that is all. Isn't that what you wanted? Yes, it was for the better; I could now go on, leading my supposedly normal life, trying to peddle my writing . . . my writing, how long had it been since I sat at the typewriter? I knew I must get back to writing, and this I did.

* * *

By the time the university was through with its Christmas break I had sold several stories. They were to appear shortly in various "journals," and while it's true that I got little money for them, it felt good to be once again doing something with my life. Oddly enough--or maybe not so odd--most all the stories had to do with "lost love" in one way or another. . . my wife leaves me, my best friend steals my girlfriend, my lover dies in a car accident. While it was true that Sheila was not preoccupying me in my conscious thoughts, or even in my dreams, images of her constantly crept into my stories. Art imitates life, that proves it.

It was also at this time that I met Wendy--yes, that's her name--, a senior at the university, and a writing major. She had overheard me talking with one of my fellow workers on the main campus, telling him that I had sold a story to a particular journal. She butted in quickly, saying she hoped to sell a story shortly, and would like to talk to me about the various outlets available for her writing.

"Well, without having read anything of yours . . ." she was quite an attractive young lady ". . . it's hard for me to say where exactly . . ." perhaps cute is a better description (after all, she was only in college) ". . . you could place them." Go for it, Jim, break out of your shell--what you need is a good fling. "Maybe if we could get together tonight for a drink, I can look over some of your writing." For the first time in months, I felt good. For a while, I thought I had lost all interest in women, but now the urge was back, even if she was quite a few years younger than I was.

The two of us were sitting in the same restaurant where I had taken Sheila. I felt uncomfortable at first, but thought that going back to the same place would exorcise me of any feeling which I still might have held for Sheila. I knew that it was time for me to start a new life, that this new life had already begun once I had gone back to the typewriter, and now I was starting to see women again. Things were changing quickly, and I felt good, real good.

* * *

It was the end of the school year, and a lot had happened since the previous summer. I had gotten over Sheila--yes Jim, I think you have--and now Wendy had taken her place. She was to move her things from the dorm to my apartment and live with me until . . . well, I hadn't really thought of Wendy leaving me, or my kicking her out . . . she was moving in as soon as graduation came, and that's all I wanted to think about at the time.

She was young, and Wendy told me that telling her parents of our living together hadn't been the easiest thing in the world to do. "What the hell," she said, "I'm on my own now--I can do what I want to do." You've corrupted another one, you know that, don't you? Perhaps it was fortunate that we had decided not to move any of her things into my place until after graduation; things became much easier because of that.

* * *

The phone rang as we entered my apartment, but by the time I got to it, the line had gone dead. Wendy and I had been celebrating her last final exam, which she felt she had passed with flying colors. With the way you keep her up all night, it's no thanks to you. Both of us were far from being sober. We undressed and got into bed, and after a period of drunken giddiness, steadied ourselves enough to finish off the celebration with a bang.

The phone rang again.

"Damn, don't people have the decency to . . ."

"Just answer it Jim, and then we'll unplug the phone so we can't be disturbed." Wendy was always so calm about these things, if only you could be that way, Jim.

* * *

Again, Chad is playing. Rolling little metal trucks along the floor, and then chasing after them. He finally works his way into the corner.

Chad? Wouldn't you like to hear about the night . . . you know . . . the night you came into my life?

* * *

"Hello. Hello."

Silence. There was someone at the other end of the line--I heard movement, not breathing, but just movement.

"Hello."

"Damn you. Damn you Jim. I go off to have your baby, and you cheat on me--take him, he's yours--just open your front door."

From the other side of the door, I heard, for the first time, Chad crying. That same night Wendy left me.

* * *

You see, Chad, mommy is dead . . . let's see, she died . . . when was it? . . . oh yes, about one year before you were born.

AN ECHO OF PIPES

(continued from page 25)

was clear to Kris now, as clear as the meaning of the temple's ruins. Even the meaning of some of the alien, carven letters was known to him now, even before he walked the long, pine-shadowed road back to his house, took down several books on mythology from their shelves, and spread one open on the table. There, the twilight showed dimly the ancient Greek letters for the name "Pan," letters already familiar to Kris. Beyond the window, in the advancing darkness, the woods would always be there.

Blood Atonement

By Robert M. Price

Ever since his conversion a couple of years before, Rich had always tried to believe God for the impossible. But tonight he couldn't help wondering whether "mountain-moving faith" had slipped over the line into fanaticism. For here he was, chilly under the moonlight, watching with embarrassment as Tony and Gabe stood before a weed-grown mausoleum and claimed a peculiar promise: "Lord, you commanded your disciples to 'heal the sick, raise the dead' and we're appropriating that scripture by faith tonight. . . ."

What did they believe would happen?, Rich wondered guiltily. What did he, what should he, believe would happen? Even the elders of their charismatic prayer community had not been so sure about this venture, but Tony and Gabe had effectively cut off debate by invoking "the Lord's leading," and now, somehow, here the three of them were.

An hour, at least, had passed, and Rich had begun to be more afraid of the caretaker's reproof than the Lord's, but from the looks of the place, no caretaker had troubled with this corner of the graveyard in a long time. Of course, that's why they'd chosen it. They didn't want to be distrubed, and it didn't make much difference who was in the tomb. It was the test of faith that mattered.

What was that? Subtle scratch-scraping--his suddenly pounding heart drowned it out. Yes, definitely--sound. Tony and Gabe had quieted to listen. A rectangle of blackness, a rush of pit-cold air--Lazarus come forth--ye of little faith--moonlight limning a fourth face!

But the shock of wrongness! Dog's fangs in a man's mouth--sting! Warmth, sweet dizziness, falling, black.

* * * * *

There must have been a funeral, or so it seemed to Rich some unknown time later. In fact he dimly recalled hearing a eulogy. "In his faith he proved more mature than many of us who were in years his senior . . ." Surprisingly his folks must have swallowed their opposition and invited his prayer-group leader, Brother Miller, to handle the service instead of Reverend Hensley from the Methodist Church the whole family had attended until two years ago. And as he thought this, Rich realized he had overheard, from the brink of waking, his own funeral. His eyes opened, dreading whatever sight would greet them. Purple and white flowers lined his field of vision as he stared up through the open casket, his eyes focusing on the high ceiling of the mortuary parlor. No mourners, thank God, were left to see him sit up. And thank God, too, he had not yet been embalmed.

There was a name for this, wasn't there? Catalepsy, or something. . . . Or was there another name for it? Rich's hand went up as if by reflex to his neck, just to the side of his adam's apple, where the undertaker had artfully concealed two punctures. First there was giddy confusion, until an odd

sensation shot the truth home like a bolt in a lock: he was hungry, but his stomach had nothing to do with it. It was a hunger he had never imagined feeling, one that some new instinct identified: blood. He needed blood.

Shockingly, amazingly, it was reality. His emotions fled in retreat before an assault they could never hope to meet. Numbly his mind felt the world mightily shift a notch and fall into place. He had felt this way once before, when he was born again. Now as then all things had become new. All bets were off, and he had to come to grips with a new creation, this time a terrible one.

* * * * *

In fact, no one was in evidence in the building, as far as Rich could tell, as he slipped outside and down the street without interference. The moon was full now; that meant he was . . . comatose . . . for a little over a week! The situation demanded that he sit down somewhere and plan, at least figure things out. He stopped in a park, but it was a mistake. He noticed two little girls, still out playing at this hour, but now scampering off home. Didn't their parents care enough to keep them inside, safe from people like . . . him? The thought had begun idly but had ended wounding him, for he realized that looking at the children he had begun to salivate.

Rich's self-revulsion wrenched him, then forced to the surface the accusing question he could no longer repress. And though he felt the heavens to be lead, he prayed croakingly, "Father, why? How?" His hands lifted in supplication but clenched into claws as if grasping for an answer that had slipped already through his fingers.

* * * * *

It wasn't too long a walk to Brother Miller's house. Rich didn't know what night of the week it was, but someone was sure to be there. If not for one of the weekly gatherings, then for the twenty-four hour prayer-chain. The large free-standing garage had been made over into a little pine-paneled chapel, and it was this to which Rich headed, the gravel swishing grittily beneath his dragging steps. He was weakening; answers were not all he needed soon. But maybe his brothers and sisters would at least be able to help him with answers.

Someone was there; he heard singing. Suddenly frozen with a chill of sick irony he recognized the chorus: "Up from the grave he arose (he arose!)/ With a mighty triumph o'er his foes . . .!" Getting a grip on himself, he knocked on the door--harder till they heard him. Finally someone opened up. Paula peeked through the crack-opened door, looking wary perhaps because of the hour. Her pretty face went blank as the impossible struggled to register. The door closed swiftly, not having been opened wide enough to slam. Rich could hear inside: "But it is! It's Rich!" A confusion of tongues sounded, and Rich could definitely pick up notes of rising panic. At length one voice, and a sentence ending with ". . . demon!"

The door came open again, and a tangle of galvanized faces stared, but Tony's and Gabe's were not among them. What had they told the rest? Had they ever made it back to the group after that night?

"Brothers and sisters," he pleaded, dropping his eyes from theirs, "you've got to help me with this . . . I'm not dead, I'm not alive either . . . God, I don't even know where my soul is!"

"Do you confess that Jesus Christ came in the flesh?" barked Brother Miller, as if it were relevant. And then Rich saw why Miller thought it was. This was sort of a password to detect demons, from the Book of First John.

"Wait, you don't understand--this is worse! I'm not possessed . . . I'm . . . a vampire!"

"There's no scriptural basis for that! This is like Saul and the Witch of Endor!" Miller assured the now trembling group. "It's a trick of Satan, a counterfeit of the resurrection of believers at the Rapture!" They seemed to believe their leader, but Rich noticed that at the word "vampire," several hands had moved to clasp the crosses hanging from their necks.

He turned and walked back into the darkness that was feeling more and more like home.

A childhood full of Saturday afternoon monster-films brought one question irresistibly to mind: how had the sight of the cross affected him? No burning, no flinching, but grief--great longing grief that against his will he had been cut off from Christ. Against his will! The words shook like defiant fists. Yet amid his rage, he felt the pain of love unrequited. But if no explanation presented itself, he still needed guidance. For the lust for blood was now growing, becoming nearly irresistible. Even if he was damned himself, he just couldn't take others with him. He mustn't spread this . . . infection. But soon, he feared, he would lose control and commit terrible sin.

The silence of the small-town night made his bewildered mind an echo-chamber, as verses of scripture bounced and ricocheted within. He thought first of Job, then of Paul with his "thorn in the flesh." And the more he thought about it, the more sense that verse seemed to make.

Rich stopped his aimless walking, gained his bearings, and headed for the cemetery. There were still a few hours of darkness left by the time he found a familiar looking mausoleum. With what he had in mind to do, he would need help, and he knew of no one else likely to give it. He began to pound on the cold stone slab.

* * * * *

The search for Rich's body had begun immediately, of course, for its absence was discovered the next morning. And the police were not long in finding it. The secretary at the Methodist Church was the one to call in the frantic report. Some madman had desecrated both the poor boy's corpse and the sanctuary, it seemed, though God alone knew who or why. When the police came, they found that the life-size mahogany cross had been taken down (the wires cut), and the body, quite simply, nailed onto it. As the officers, faces contorted in disgust, worked to remove the nails without doing further damage to the now fragile corpse, Reverend Hensley noticed that whoever had done this had not quite known his Bible. For besides those in the hands and feet, there was an extra spike--through the heart.

The Madness out of Space

By Peter H. Cannon

I.

Friends and family have wondered at my abrupt return from college a full week before the beginning of the Easter vacation. Explanations of an unforeseen, early termination of school work I hope have satisfied them; for I dare not hint as yet as to the real cause. Eventually, I realize, I must tell them--and the world--of the fate of my roommate and closest friend, Howard Wentworth Anable, who disappeared in the early morning of March 15, 1929, into the densely forested, still winter-frozen hills that extend west of the university town of Arkham, Massachusetts--or so people believe. How much of the "truth" I will reveal remains for me to decide, as I run the risk of being declared as mad as that singular individual whose bizarre and lamentable history I am here about to disclose. I admit that relations between us had been strained in those final months, an unhappy consequence of his physical and mental deterioration; but this in no way affected the underlying fondness and respect I had always held for him.

I fear that I have seen the last of my comrade; for certain evidence--certain damnably conclusive evidence, which for the sake of mankind's collective sanity I hesitate to reveal--indicates that he has ventured into terrible cosmic realms from which no mortal can ever return.

Duty required that I inform Anable's mother and grandmother, who live near the center of the old colonial town, of my gravest suspicions; but without giving away anything of the specific horror I had observed. The Anables had half-anticipated a climax of this sort, and bore their grief with admirable Yankee stoicism. There ensued a discreet investigation, which received no publicity other than a short notice in the Arkham Advertiser.

The police theorize that Anable was forceably abducted, the broken window and the disordered furniture and books in his bedroom supporting this conclusion. Anable's relatives had known of his association with an undesirable band of cultists, who, camped out in the Arkham hills, may have taken revenge on the youth for some imagined transgression of their laws. Search parties discovered no trace of Anable or his suspected abductors (who, in any event, may have left the area months before), and after several days they abandoned their trappings through the woods.

Naturally the authorities questioned me closely, but I was able to demonstrate to their satisfaction that I knew little of Anable's dealings with any queer characters living in the hills. Through an extreme effort of will I managed to suppress my feelings of awful horror and show only normal shock and dismay. Indeed, until the last mind-shattering revelation I had dismissed Anable's ravings as nothing more than a lot of theosophical hocus-pocus. A rational man could easily have taken his strange pronouncement toward the end as the phantasies of a psychotic. But now I know otherwise; and because I do I may myself fall a victim to those same dread forces that claimed my friend. Therefore, for the written record, I am presently setting down, during these days of early New England spring, while events are

still fresh and there is still time for me, an account of this frightful matter--of the madness out of space.

II.

I met Howard Anable our freshman year at Miskatonic University, which is not Harvard, nor is it even Ivy League, but whose unparalleled reputation as a freewheeling, "progressive," co-ed institution attracts unconventional and original minds who care little for prestige. It is located in the glamorous old, gambrel-roofed town of Arkham, renowned along the North Shore as a place especially sensitive to adumbrations of the paranormal. Both he and I enrolled in an advanced course in Colonial American literature. (Miskatonic's Pickman collection of early American documents is justly famous for its size and completeness--second only to that of the John Carter Hay Library at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island.) I was immediately impressed, as were the other students and Professor Waggoner, by his profound and encyclopaedic knowledge of the subject. Anable boasted that he had read Cotton Mather's Magnalia Christi Americana in its entirety, and would quote lengthy passages from memory to illustrate all sorts of nice points in class discussion. It appeared that he had done extensive research from his earliest years into the history, folklore, culture, and architecture of New England.

Physically unobtrusive on first sight, Anable really cut a remarkable figure the more one studied him. He had a frame so excessively spare that, although he stood an inch or two above average height, people usually took him to be much taller. A spectrally pale complexion, set off by strikingly deep, intelligent brown eyes and short-cropped, mousy brown hair, combined to give his face a perpetually startled expression. (That he was fair-haired and blue-eyed as a child Anable never tired of repeating when I knew him better.) He wore conservative clothing, a dark suit with a plain, dark knit tie being his preferred dress.

Although I frequently engaged in academic debate with Anable, I knew practically nothing about him outside the classroom, other than that he lived at his family's home on Valley Street. Fellow students remarked that they never noticed him at any of the usual campus haunts; rumor had it that he spent his free hours taking long, solitary walks beyond the town. His rapid stooping gait soon became his distinctive hallmark.

An independent figure, Anable ignored the vogueish crowd of campus "sophisticates," who courted him as someone whose eccentricities and tastes would have made him immediately welcome among their select circles. Instead, his high-handed disdain of their "immature indulgences," as he put it, won only their resentment. I myself, being by nature more gregarious and eager to be accepted by the elite, was at first given to mixing with the "wild set" but by the Christmas holidays I had grown weary of their superficial, pseudo-decadent thrill-seeking, and ceased associating with them altogether with the start of the second term in January.

I think Anable observed this shift in my social preferences. He began speaking to me on his own initiative after the honors American literature class, devoted to a thorough study of those classic if largely neglected authors--Cooper, Irving, and Charles Brockden Brown--of the early Republic, that

we shared in the new term. A casual friendship developed between us that I was pleased to cultivate; for I appreciated in Anable his genuine erudition and sobriety of manner--indicative, I sensed, of a special understanding of things outside the ordinary in life.

We soon discovered that we held a good many common interests, as Anable's outward reticence gave way to a voluble stream of talk about himself and his ideas. I already knew him to be an enthusiastic student of the New England scene; now I learned the personal side.

Howard Wentworth Anable was descended from a line of well-to-do Arkham merchants who had flourished during the days of clipper ships and the China trade; the family since the turn of the century, however, having been reduced to the state politely known as "genteel poverty." As a boy of nine, soon after the death of his father, he had moved with his mother from his family's Anawan Avenue mansion, built in the 1820s by his great-great-grandfather, Captain Adoniram Anable, celebrated in Arkham history for his daring exploits in the South Seas, to the less than grand neighborhood of Valley Street. (The log of the Miskatonic, the vessel in which Captain Anable made his most successful voyages, is preserved in the archives of the Arkham Institute.) His first American ancestor, of Northumberland stock, had sailed on the Arbella in 1636, Anable proudly told me once; adding that his people were among the very earliest settlers of Cape Cod. Of his father Anable rarely spoke--and then merely to say that he had worked for the 'phone company.

I visited Anable at his home, a privilege granted to few, and was much impressed by the Chinese plates and vases, Polynesian wood-carvings, and scrimshaw still in the family's possession--surviving relics of a more prosperous age that seemed so sadly out of place in the undistinguished, Victorian frame house, divided into apartments, that now formed the Anable abode. With no brothers or sisters or congenial playmates to divert him with the usual childhood activities, Anable had grown up with only the memories and dust of the past to occupy his imagination. A voracious reader, he had mastered the family library with its shelves of mouldy Essex County histories and other quaint, antique volumes. Anable sometimes spoke wistfully to me of someday recovering the family mansion and restoring it to a semblance of that departed glory of his forebears. Alas, that shall never be!

Anable detested cats, and in his youth used to throw rocks at any feline so foolish as to prowl into the Anable backyard and wander within range. He also hated ice cream, amazing as it may seem that anyone could become nauseous at even the slightest taste of this universally loved treat. On the other hand, staunch New Englander that he was, Anable adored seafood--lobster, clams, fried or steamed, mussels with butter, cod, scrod, sole, flounder or haddock, chowder of the Boston variety, he relished them all.

In his devotion to this vision of a purer, happier past, he had, with the advent of his teens and less parental supervision, become increasingly drawn to the countryside beyond Arkham--to the pine, maple, and birch forest that covers the undulant, ravine-intersected hills as far as the sparsely populated regions of the upper Miskatonic valley. It had been on extended walks through the woods that Anable had felt his most exquisite and poignant sensations of wonder and adventurous expectancy--caught especially at sunset in the vista of the golden rooves of the town laid out below.

That spring Anable took me to his favorite spot for viewing Arkham and its sunset effects--Satan's Ledge, an outcropping of sedimentary rock on one of the higher hillsides (part of a vast tract of public land), well-nigh inaccessible from the Arkham direction save for a difficult ascent up its steep slope through uncommonly thick vegetation. Believing me not up to the strenuous climb, Anable suggested that we ride the Bolton bus which drops off passengers during warm months at a roadside picnic area on the westward fringe of the hill, where the slope is considerably gentler. From this picnic area was but a walk of a half mile along a well-marked path to the ledge.

Indeed a scenic viewpoint, Satan's Ledge formed a level surface of moderate extent, upon which rested granite boulders arranged in a disturbingly symmetrical pattern--one that no retreating ice sheet was likely to have left, in my opinion. Peculiar ideographs, most badly eroded, were graven on these imposing rocks--no doubt the work of the vanished Indians. Ethnographers had conjectured them to be of cabalistic or magical significance, Anable informed me, but who could say for sure with so few discernible details. Analogues are to be found on rocks in the remote mountain regions of Vermont and Maine and in the decadent hill country around Dunwich.

At the end of the school year in June, our friendship firmly fixed, Anable asked me if I cared to share lodgings with him for sophomore year.

"I've noticed, Winsor," he began, as we sat in the Ratty, the undergraduate refectory, over coffee (his heavily laden with sugar as was his custom), "that you're a fairly sensitive fellow. I think you're someone who understands, who sympathizes. Living with my mother and feeble old grandmother while going to college I've found 'restrictive,' to say the least. It's time I got out on my own, and I don't mean into one of the hideous dormitories with the herd. I'd like a companion--partly for financial reasons I admit--who'd be willing to go halves with me on a place.

"You see, Winsor, I feel I'm on the verge of making a 'rift in the horizon's wall,' so to speak--but just where or how I cannot begin to tell, let alone explain to you. It has something to do with the sense of adventurous expectancy that hits me on occasion whenever I view scenes of particular aesthetic appeal, such as old gardens, antique harbours, or Georgia steeples topped with gilded vanes." Anable's great brown eyes glowed, as if he were gazing at a Bullfinch cupola and not a student cafeteria.

"I'm afraid that if I become too absorbed in my search I may lose all sense of proper proportion, act rashly. I may well need a friend close at hand, someone stable whose good judgment I can rely on--a pal such as you to point out to me when I'm going astray."

Flattered by his proposal, I was nonetheless taken aback by his last cryptic remarks. My uneasiness must have been obvious to Anable, for he suddenly shifted back to the main point.

"I've found decent furnished rooms at 973 Hale Street near the end of the trolley line at the north end of town. The location may be far from campus, but the trolley stop is just two blocks away. I've been there once, when I answered the ad in the Advertiser. The landlady, Mrs. Delisio, would provide meals. If you're free we can go take a look right now."

I could not help but be intrigued by Anable's offer; here was a unique opportunity to increase our intimacy. His baffling comments forgotten, I readily assented to examining the place. We drained our cups and headed

out for the trolley stop in front of Miskatonic Hall.

The building at 973 Hale Street proved to be a small, eighteenth-century clapboard house, which retained much of its antique charm despite its overall dilapidation. I was particularly struck by the isolation of the address, right at the outskirts of Arkham proper. A stretch of dreary marsh land bordered the modest backyard.

The "upstairs suite"--two bedrooms separated by a common sitting room--was clean if bare and severe, containing the basic minimum of furniture. From the windows, which faced the rear, one could look out over the acres of marsh to where the wooded hillsides rose, brilliant with spring green--and to Satan's Ledge, which Anable pointed out to me, just visible as a grey protuberance.

The price Mrs. Delisio cited was only too reasonable, and we signed a year's lease on the spot. Mrs. Delisio, an elderly widow, seemed glad to have engaged two Yankee boys as lodgers. Anable announced his intention of taking up residence for the summer, agreeing to pay the whole rent until I joined him in the fall. He said that his mother would probably disapprove, but there was nothing she could do. Her policy had never been to oppose him when he was adamant enough in his wishes--within certain limits. Besides, he had recently secured a job stamping and addressing envelopes and doing other petty tasks for a local bookseller, and thus he figured he could almost cover this new expense with his summer earnings.

III.

After transferring my few belongings to our new quarters on Hale Street and helping Anable move his possessions there, I rode the B. & M. home to Boston, not expecting to return to Arkham until September. I lingered briefly at our residence on narrow, cobbled Acorn Street, before repairing with my family to our house in West Chop, on the island of Martha's Vineyard, for the summer. I looked forward to the idle months of sailboat racing, tennis playing, and sun bathing, after the academic rigors of the past year at Miskatonic. A part-time volunteer job at the Dukes County Historical Society, conducting tours at the venerable Richard C. Norton "Reading Room," would form my excuse for useful employment. My father's harpsichord factory in Cambridge had thrived mightily in recent years, and he was in a position to spend the entire summer on the island, much to the delight of the rest of us, leaving his business to the care of junior partners.

As I settled into the pleasant routine of healthy athletic activities by day (when not at the museum) and gala social events by night (in particular the weekly dances at the Casino), I began sending Anable cheery postcards, urging him to come pay me a visit. His staying in that stuffy apartment all summer, pursuing his esoteric researches in the university library (in between stuffing envelopes and his usual rambles in the countryside), struck me in my agreeable environment as more and more dubious. A change of scene, a little "fun," would be good for my scholarly friend.

These accounts of my idyllic existence elicited a response from Anable that plainly revealed to what an advanced degree he had already become immersed in the offbeat historical lore he had made his special province. (Puzzled at first by the "1728" at the head of the letter, I eventually realized

that Anable--antiquarian that he was--affected to date his correspondence two hundred years earlier.) Here is the complete text.

26 June 1728

My dear Winsor:--

How infinitely gratifying to hear from you of your tennis and dancing, and I do appreciate your invitation to come join you in said frivolous diversions. Quite frankly, however, in light of an exciting development here, I'm afraid I haven't the time to indulge in such things. I think you'll understand when you absorb what I say below.

While you've been burning in the sun (by the way, I don't care to tan), I've made an important discovery. You may remember I told you that I intended to read all the material available at the library on those queer Indian ideographs at Satan's Ledge? (Of course, I already knew the general background--but, I must confess, I was rather weak on the more recent history of the formation. Post-Civil War history has never really interested me.) Well, in the course of digging through the stacks, I came across a very curious monograph, "Satan and His Works in Latter-Day New England," printed privately in 1879 by one Thomas Hazard Clarke of Arkham, concerning an odd religious sect that had a settlement near Satan's Ledge in the latter part of the last century. Originally a Shaker splinter group, which Clarke belonged to, this motley assortment of pious fanatics came gradually to fall away from orthodox Christian practices. It seems the more lunatic of them began to assimilate elements of the pagan myths surrounding Satan's Ledge from the few surviving Indians in the region, and took to holding ceremonies at the ledge surreptitiously--"in which the Christian deity had no part." Many of the members, several dozen men of all ages, were dim, stupid folk, degenerate from generations of inbreeding. Clarke and others who continued in the pure faith were naturally alarmed by this ominous conversion among a sizeable portion of the community. The apostates grew in number, as it devolved that somehow their gods or "Old Ones," which they called by the exotic names of "Azathoth," "Nyarlathotep," "Yog-Sothoth," and "Cthulhu" ("agents of the devil" to Clarke), were more receptive to their worship than the aloof-from-the-petty-affairs-of-men traditional God. At last, with the defection of the chief minister, John G. Hartnett, to the new "Cthulhu cult," as it became known as, they began to practice the blasphemous faith more openly, using the ideographs apparently to aid in "calling down from the sky" some mysterious entity which Clarke guardedly refers to as "the madness out of space." During certain times of secret worship at night among the degenerates, Clarke could detect a horribly foul odour emanating from the direction of the ledge, along with a muted white glow in the atmosphere above it--but he never tried to witness these repulsive ceremonies for himself. When finally the situation became intolerable, Clarke, as leader of the few members remaining true to the original faith, organized his followers into a campaign to suppress the heresy. Unfortunately, at this point in his hitherto detailed narrative, he becomes vague, hinting merely that after a "great trial," in which he and his men had to resort to means derived from

the unclean rituals of the Cthulhuists--and with the assistance of selected Arkham town officials--they succeeded in eradicating the evil. He is specific about a "cataclysm of God" occurring on October 31, 1878, which utterly destroyed the Cthulhu cult--a fire that swept the settlement and burned to the ground every dwelling (tents and flimsy shacks). Most perished in the conflagration, including Hartnett, the few survivors scattering into oblivion. Clarke retired to Arkham, a badly shaken man, but his solid faith along with the help of an alienist, as he candidly admits, sustained him. He warns others of the dangers of deviation from Christianity, closing with a long, pedantic section extolling the virtues of the Congregationalist Church to which in the end he converted.

Clarke is reasonably precise about the location of the community, and I'm confident I can find it somewhere to the west of Satan's Ledge when I go look for it tomorrow after work. That fire he speaks of must have thoroughly effaced the site, since undoubtedly I've passed over it in my exploration and not noticed any remains. In fifty years the forest can wholly reclaim a cleared area.

I'll let you know what my search turns up. Until we meet again, and wishing you luck in the forthcoming holiday races, I am

Yr. Humble Servt. HWA

My reaction to this incredible missive can scarcely be imagined. As I studied its substance the initial indignation I had felt at Anable's cavalier dismissal of my invitation and aspersions on my summer lifestyle gave way to an ambivalent sense of skepticism and wonder. This Cthulhu cult business was indeed an intriguing mystery, but evidently this Thomas Clarke was some kind of half-baked religious crank who had made up most--if not all--of this wild story. (Funny that Anable seemed to accept the narrative almost at face value.) Yet, even if the element of truth was small, here was a peculiar historical footnote of the sort to satisfy Anable's longing for the outré.

I did not have to wait a week before hearing the sequel.

1 July 1728

Winsor:--

Eureka! Success! Forgive this uncharacteristic outburst of elation, but truly marvel grows upon marvel. I've discovered what I believe is the former cult site. I'll concede my conclusion isn't based on any direct evidence, for I found no charred relics--rather in a part of the woods a quarter-mile northwest of Satan's Ledge, where the trees are relatively sparse, there stands a makeshift hovel, which could only have been erected within the last couple of weeks. I can tell someone is living in it from the rough mat and store of supplies inside. No, I haven't met its inhabitant. But I've caught glimpses of him, an elderly man in tattered, nondescript garments, in its vicinity and at Satan's Ledge--where I nearly surprised him in the act of carving fresh ideographs into the rocks, in an apparent effort to restore those obliterated by weather and time. These, when I examined them, proved, crude as they were, not to be mere copies of tourist graffiti--but new designs

consistent with legible existing ones! I'd evidently interrupted him in the midst of his work, because when I returned the next day there were several more carved into the brittle granite. I've not come close to catching this individual since our near encounter at the ledge, try as I might--and lately I've been thinking maybe it's a bit unwise for me to attempt it alone.

To speak plainly, would you mind coming up to Arkham to help me run this fellow to ground? If we could only talk to him I suspect he could tell us a fascinating story or two about the ledge and the ideographs and, who knows, perhaps the cult. Surely after the 4th celebrations Wednesday you could take some time off. Possibly this coming weekend? Anxiously awaiting your reply, I am

Yr. Servt. H.

I reacted to this second letter from Anable, received on the 3rd, with a great deal of confusion. Where before he had simply outlined a fanciful if disquieting story from a pamphlet in a library, now he had ventured into the physical reality of the Arkham woods and found a real mystery--an innocuous one on the surface to my mind and yet a touch sinister, if one could credit the Clarke monograph at all. Reluctant to miss the Fireman's Ball in Edgartown on Saturday but eager to assist my friend, I wired him to say that he could expect me Thursday, with the condition that I had to be back on the island by the evening of the 7th. I departed the morning of the 5th, a successful Fourth of July race series behind me.

Upon my arrival Anable impatiently rushed through the civilities and described his plan to me. We would get up just before dawn, the idea being that our chances of catching the inhabitant of the hovel were better the earlier we reached the site. An inveterate night owl whose natural tendency was to stay up to three or four in the morning and then sleep well past noon, Anable was grateful for my presence if only to ensure his waking up at the appointed hour. Accordingly, we set the alarm for 5 a.m. and retired. Anable was glad I had been exercising regularly, since we would be approaching the ledge by the steep route. As I was weary from traveling much of the day--by ferry, by motorcoach, and by train--I fell asleep instantly on the bed my chum had thoughtfully made up for me.

The next morning, after a breakfast of coffee and crackers and cheese (standard fare for Anable), we stole silently from the house in the half-light of an already warmish day and going a block east hit Route 127, the main north-south road that follows the coast of the North Shore. At this point in its sinuous course, just north of Arkham, 127 swings to the west and runs through an unpopulated stretch of woods, bordered by salt marshes on its eastern fringes. (Though Satan's Ledge was only about a mile-and-a-half away as the crow flies from 973 Hale Street, these marshes prevented us from reaching it directly.)

Farms had prospered in this region as late as the early nineteenth century, but had gone into rapid decline during the War of 1812 and the succeeding period of economic stagnation. One could hardly believe that where white pine and birch now stood once waved fields of corn, beans, tomatoes, and carrots, acre after acre in the rocky New England soil. Stone walls, in want of mending or in places simply heaps of rubble, ran nowhere through

the trees and brush, mute testimony to old property lines.

We did not keep for long to this main thoroughfare, however, but shortly took a left turn onto one of the occasional dirt roads leading into the forest interior. We must have followed this for a couple of hundred yards before coming to a fork, where Anable selected the more overgrown path (for it no longer could be properly called a road). Though the branches of the trees we passed under blocked much of the little light there was, Anable never faltered and showed no hesitation in his choice of direction when we encountered other forks in the course of our journey. Midges and other flying insects pestered us, and we swatted at these without much effect. As the ground rose perceptibly, I started to perspire.

Finally we were picking our way along what was at best a faint animal trail in the thick of the woods. All at once a steep slope, more nearly accurately a cliff, emerged before us and we began the precipitous climb Anable had warned me about. Above loomed the grey eminence of Satan's Ledge.

After many minutes of toil we stood, panting, on the flat surface of the ledge. The sun was above the horizon by this time, and we admired the view of Arkham below and the sea beyond shimmering in the dawn. A lovely sight, but nothing, averred Anable, like its appearance at sunset.

Before showing me the new ideographs and checking for any more recent carving, Anable pointed out in disgust the "signs" that other, undesirable types (certainly not our man) had left to advertise their visits. Debris littered the rock floor: cigarette butts, paper wrappers, a beer bottle or two, and--upon the part of the ledge covered by a smooth layer of soft earth or humus--several flattened, translucent balloons with wide mouths, resembling the hydra or some other primitive marine animal. (I had noticed this same peculiar detritus washed up in great numbers on Martin's Beach near Gloucester, where my family used to summer in the days prior to our acquiring the Vineyard house.)

We surveyed this sorry spectacle but for a moment before Anable directed my attention to what was of prime importance. On the great, most easterly boulder stood out four rows of bizarre figures--a sequence of alien hieroglyphics whose outlines vaguely suggested odd animal forms rather than abstract characters. These incised figures, each six inches or so in height, proved on closer inspection to be highlighted by a dullish red pigment ground into the contours. They ran roughly in horizontal lines, about a dozen to each line, as regularly as the irregular surface of the granite allowed. Anable calculated that they had been created over a period of two weeks, at the rate of three or four a day. Original, worn figures had been carved over to form a kind of palimpsest. Other boulders had many fewer inscribed markings, we noted.

Once I had satisfied myself with my first view of these astonishing glyphs, Anable led me deeper into the trees in a northwesterly direction. Nature was very much evident at this hour--a rabbit scampered out of sight ahead, squirrels and chipmunks chattered at us as they scurried along branches, and above the pine tops I spotted the distinctive, "flying cigar" forms of chimney swifts gliding soundlessly, along with a stray green heron aimed for the marshes behind and below us. Fallen tree trunks white with fungi oozed the odor of decay--a not unpleasant scent.

After a fifteen-minute trek the woods and undergrowth thinned and we

came out into a clearing. Wild flowers grew in spectacular clumps here, covering any sign of former human habitation--for this, conjectured Anable, was where the religious colony had been planted almost fifty years ago.

We crossed the expanse of clearing to where the trees began to grow thick again by a stream, and there beneath a great pine bough was a lean-to, or more accurately perhaps, tee-pee about five feet high. Peering cautiously inside, we saw a tarpaulin and blankets, a small cupboard, an ax, and other camping gear. A pile of ashes and blackened wood circled by stones in front bespoke the remains of a fire. Nearby on the ground rested a chisel and mallet, plus a stick of red chalk.

"Hello, young fellers," cried a hearty voice. "Up kind of early, ain't you, for a nature walk?"

We both turned around at once to observe, coming out of a pine copse about fifteen yards to our right, a short, thickly built, elderly man--smiling at us and tugging at his pants. He wore what amounted to a suit of earth-colored rags, and more than a touch of redness rimmed his eyes, the only part of his face visible in the great, grey mass of hair and whiskers that covered his head. He reminded me of the sort of slovenly rustic one tried to avoid noticing loafing around the Arkham Trailways station. Despite his decrepit clothing, he appeared to have a robust physique, and showed none of the faltering slowness of the aged as he advanced a few steps toward us, then halted. If not for his cheerful tone of voice and ingratiating manner, I would have thought him a very threatening fellow.

"What business have you boys in this stretch of the woods?" he asked.

Anable answered that he often took walks in the Arkham hills, and had done so most of his life. Shifting to the offensive, my friend asked in turn what he was doing camping in these parts, and whether he had a permit.

"Well, my lad, I must tell you I'm no newcomer to this beautiful country," said he, looking appreciatively about, "though it's been a good many years since I last set foot here--long before you youngsters were toddling around nosing into your elders' affairs. I was camped on this land when a person didn't need a permit to set up a house. Least we didn't bother with one. . . . Maybe that's why we had to leave all of a sudden." He chuckled, enjoying his private joke.

Anable asked if he had had anything to do with the "Shaker" community that used to be located at this site--and was he around at the time of the "cataclysm of God" that had destroyed it.

"Oh, you've heard of that, have you? Thought folks had hushed that up ages ago. Not something people in polite circles in Arkham would talk about, even at the time."

Anable said that he had studied the Clarke monograph, "Satan and His Works in Latter-Day New England," and persisted in his questioning.

"So you've read that packet of lies that parsimonious prig slandered our memory with. . . . Yeh, I guess I was a part of it. But before I say more, who be you? And who be your quiet friend?"

My comrade introduced himself as Howard Wentworth Anable of Arkham, Massachusetts, and me as his fellow Miskatonic student, E. Phillips Winsor. Did I detect a happy gleam in the old man's eye, an abrupt perking up, at the mention of Anable's name?

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Anable, Mr. Winsor," he said, nodding to each

of us, with a certain mock deference. With an enthusiasm lacking before he said, "Harper is my name. Jay Harper." I was grateful to be at a distance, as I had no desire to shake the paw of this unkempt vagabond.

"Yeh, I did belong to the sect. I was a youth then, not much older than you boys. In '76 it was. My people, they come from far up the valley--of good sound stock, mind you. My governor practiced law when he wasn't running the general store--sent me to Yale College for a spell, but Yale and me didn't hit it off and so we parted company.

"I had a hankering to wander, and came to Arkham since I heard the mills needed strong, healthy chaps like me. But I guess I was too late, 'cause I couldn't find a job right away. In the meantime, I became friendly with some of the members of this religious community in the hills who said it was okay for me to make my home with them--not that I was ever a devout churchgoer but it was a lot cheaper than staying in lodgings in town. Later when I got a mill job I kept where I was. I had a wild streak then, and I came to see that what those folks were up to was kind of exciting. . . . If that self-righteous blockhead Tim Clarke hadn't meddled in business he had no understanding of. . . ." Harper glowered. "Satan's Ledge, huh! Clarke with all his Bible learning could only figure things in Christian terms. We called it by a more suitable name, of course."

Harper smiled wistfully, adding sadly, "Well, if you've read that stupid 'treatise' of his you know the upshot. Poor Hartnett, he meant no harm. I was lucky to get away from that burning mess alive. I went back to Dunwich, where I've worked ever since for Whateley's Tree Service. Never been back to Arkham till now."

Harper paused, casting his eyes down on the chisel and mallet waiting for use. Anable asked why he had returned--and why he was carving new ideographs--and what was their significance.

"Now, son, don't be overinquisitive--one question at a time. Let's just say that I'm indulging myself in a show of sentimental reminiscence. Preparing the stage the way we used to before performing the rituals. I'm carving them from memory for old time's sake, you understand. There's no harm in it--we weren't bothering anyone outside the cult. As for their meaning, I might tell you another time. . . ." His throaty chuckle after this remark made me flinch.

"See here, lads, maybe . . . maybe you can help me out. If you do, I'll tell you some secrets about the old cult that few persons alive today could begin to guess at. . . . I'm running low on supplies, and would be obliged to you if you'd buy me some groceries. In my state I'm afraid I'd draw too much unkindly attention if I was to go into town myself." He pulled out an oily sheet from his jacket, along with some dollar bills more brown than green. "Here's my list of what I need, and to show you how much I trust you boys"--he was looking straight at Anable--"I'm giving you the money now, no collateral. Do this for me and come back here in a few days and I promise I'll tell you some tales I think you'd like to hear. . . ." So saying, he passed the bills to Anable, who nodded in apparent assent.

Jay Harper retrieved his chisel and mallet, along with his red chalk stick, and escorted us back to the ledge, explaining that he could only get his work done there at odd hours--when snoops like ourselves were not around to disturb him.

"Our mysterious character-carver should reveal a thing or two of real interest, I think," declared Anable as we clambered gingerly down the slope. "Doesn't seem to be a dangerous sort either--though I was glad to have you standing by, Winsor. My impulse is to help out the old geezer, buy him his groceries. Too bad you can't stay around to see for yourself what happens."

My reaction to our meeting with this queer hill person was somewhat less enthusiastic than my companion's. When I told him so, he simply laughed and dismissed me as an old maid.

At my departure from Arkham the next morning, Anable renewed his vow to apprise me of further developments. Making the right connections, I was back on the island in sufficient time to attend the Fireman's Ball.

IV.

A month passed before I heard from Anable again, a longer interval than I might have expected in view of his eager anticipation of revelations to come when I left him. Had the old ruffian disappeared on him? Or had Harper's tales turned out to be so disappointing that Anable was ashamed to report on them to me? In any event, this Harper character was clearly a demented fool who was not to be relied upon as far as I was concerned.

Anable's letter (dated normally for once) read as follows:

August 8, 1928

My dear W:--

Pardon the delay, but I've been so absorbed in matters here that I've not been able to concentrate long enough to write even the briefest note. Between the necessary drudgery of licking envelopes at Dawber & Pyne and my conferences with Harper, I've hardly had a moment to eat or sleep! Let me begin by assuring you that our forest friend has proved informative beyond my wildest imaginings.

I returned with the groceries two days after our initial encounter, taking the more roundabout but easier route from the picnic grounds in light of my load. A bottle of bootleg whiskey I'd included as a surprise did much to encourage Harper's natural garrulousness, and he spoke to me for hours about the cult while I listened in wonder. Gad, what this man knows! What he has experienced! Harper informed me that he had had vivid dreams, growing in persistency, that drove him back to the settlement site--and in those dreams a cultivated young man figured prominently. When I'd said my name that first meeting he'd known instantly that it was I he'd seen in his dreams! He interprets this as a sign that I can be of invaluable service to him. When he asked for my help (and not just in supplying him with groceries), I readily agreed. Forgive me for not being specific on the nature of his purposes--even I'm not really sure--but Harper has made it a condition of our "pact" that I confide in no one, not even you, dear fellow. Already I say too much. The potential reward for me is tremendous, and I trust you'll understand when I tell you I don't want to jeopardize my chances to earn it.

Suffice it to say that now that Harper has finished engraving the glyphs (the ones he hadn't remembered from his youth came to him in

visions), he requires the consultation of certain arcane books available in the locked stacks of the Miskatonic library. In particular, he wishes me to transcribe passages from Abdul Alhazred's Necronomicon, perhaps the rarest and most marvelous tome in the collection. As a Miskatonic student I of course would be granted access to this volume more readily than he. I applied to the head librarian, Dr. Henry Armitage, who permitted me--albeit reluctantly--to copy from it. Harper could only provide me from memory with approximate locations of the pertinent passages, with a vague outline of their content. (The cult's copy was lost in the flames of '78.) My Latin proved fair enough, however, for me to determine from the context which lines were relevant.

Harper was pleased with the material I collected, and wanted me to make a second trip to the library for further transcription. Unfortunately, the next time I went to continue my research, on the 3rd, I was disappointed. Dr. Armitage, who has gone into seclusion at his house and refuses to see a soul, has left instructions forbidding anyone to be shown the Necronomicon. Harper greeted this ill turn of fortune with dismay, but thinks what I managed to get copied down before may be sufficient. Our progress is delayed, yet other resources do exist.

Looking forward to catching up in person fall term, I remain

Yr. Servt. HWA.

So, Anable had taken to humoring the old half-wit in his crazy pursuits. I was beginning to grow alarmed, recalling that the Necronomicon had been furtively discussed among the decadent circles I had spurned as a book of colossal, cosmic evil. For the first time it struck me that Anable might be losing sight of reality. His account of his servility to Harper served to confirm my distrust of that scruffy creature. When I wrote Anable back, I told him as politely as possible that I disapproved of Harper and that he ought to keep away from him. In reply I got a short note from Anable, pervaded by a wounded, defensive tone, saying that I was regarding the situation in the wrong way and would understand better when he could explain things to me face to face in the fall.

The remainder of the summer passed pleasantly for me. It culminated spectacularly in an all-night Labor Day weekend aboard our yawl, Arethusa, anchored off the West Chop light. With this fete fresh in my memory, I anticipated the return to Miskatonic and reunion with Anable in a gay, trouble-free mood, the very opposite of the one I had sunk into at the time of receiving his unsettling letter.

V.

To say that Anable had subtly changed by the time I arrived back in Arkham in mid-September would be an understatement. As I stepped off the B. & M. coach at the station, he greeted me with an energy and effusiveness that I was wholly unaccustomed to. His usually languid brown eyes were animated, almost mirthful. He exhibited none of the somber demeanor so characteristic of him, and his pace was quicker than ever.

"Great and wonderful things are in the offing, Winsor," exclaimed my buoyant buddy as we settled ourselves on the trolley. "I've gotten to know

our friend Harper pretty well in a couple of months. He's really quite a respectable fellow--a decent, middle-class Yankee, and a college man to boot (at least he was for a while). A pity he's had hard luck. But with a few changes of clothing I've provided him--well, it's made a big difference, as you'll see. . . ."

Anable paused a moment, slightly embarrassed. "I have to warn you, Winsor, that I've allowed Harper to use your room, to stay overnight from time to time during damp weather. But of course now that you're back, he'll return to the woods for good. Besides, he now has company."

I looked quizzical.

"Yes, others have joined our survivor. There're presently several of his former cult members living on the old site. They, too, have heard the call--in their dreams just as Harper did--and have gathered from disparate parts of the country. They've set up a regular small camp--nothing like on the scale of the original of course."

I watched the houses become sparser as we approached the end of the line, and for the first time regretted my decision to move out of the comparative civilization of the university dorms. I was not at my ease as we tramped the short length of the front walk and marched up the stairs to the second floor of 973 Hale Street.

As we entered the sitting room, a gentleman arose from the sofa whom I did not immediately recognize as the bedraggled individual I had met in the woods in the summer. His shock of hair was combed, and his sturdy frame was decked out in clean checked shirt, denim trousers, and brand new work boots. This time I shook hands with Jay Harper. Apparently he had been reading, for next to him on the end table and on the sofa itself were scattered a number of battered, dingy-looking books.

"Well, Howard, I thank you again for letting me read at your place. Fine titles these books are. It'd be a shame if I had to store them in the tee-pee where the moisture'd get at them. Good day to you both," said the old man, picking up his jacket and striding out the door.

I glanced down at the more modern volumes on the sofa; among them, Melmoth the Wanderer, R. W. Chambers' The King in Yellow, Bierce's In the Midst of Life, and Lord Dunsany's A Dreamer's Tales in the Modern Library pocket edition.

Noting my look of distaste, Anable made a half-hearted effort to allay my worries.

"While working at Dawber & Pyne this summer," he began, "I had the chance to search through their stock of secondhand books. Amazing what they kept lying around in dusty cartons in the attic. Because of their poor condition I was able to pick them up for a steal. Harper made a few suggestions on what to keep an eye out for and choose. His knowledge of the literature in the field is truly profound. I discovered more interesting works than I thought existed. They've been a great help in filling the gaps in the data we culled from the Necronomicon. Just because an author writes 'fiction' doesn't mean he doesn't put some important truths into his books, whether intentionally or not.

"Don't be alarmed--we're not out to destroy the world," he said, smiling. "It's all simply a personal concern that doesn't affect anybody else."

I was not persuaded by these arguments to disarm me. I said nothing,

and went into my bedroom to arrange my effects that had been shipped in advance of my arrival.

Despite his initial show of friendliness, Anable displayed little interest in me or my affairs in succeeding weeks. I resented this behavior, and now and then told him that he was involved in a lot of rubbish--but he continued to ignore me. Harper came to the apartment twice in the next month for conferences with Anable, held in his room with the door shut. (Had there been a lock on it I have no doubt he would have used it.) My roommate made frequent trips to the vicinity of Satan's Ledge--or so I assumed, for he rarely bothered to tell me of his plans before going out. He never asked me to join him. When I ventured to mention my feelings of exclusion, Anable assured me that he would reveal what he and Harper were up to at the appropriate time. I must remain patient.

In any event, I had my course work to absorb me. "Eighteenth Century Gothick Taste in England," "Literature of the Restoration" (with an emphasis on Shadwell), "Differential Equations," and "American Transcendentalism" (taught by Professor Albert N. Wilmarth who started the class a week late owing, rumor had it, to an upsetting, overnight visit to Vermont shortly before term began) kept me immersed in my books for long hours. Anable, on the other hand, scarcely opened a text, his dubious collection of the weird forming his chief reading material. He often cut classes, an evening course in "Medieval Metaphysics" being the only one he attended faithfully. In sum, he was no longer the conscientious student of the previous year. I feared for his scholarship status.

At the apartment Anable alternated between extremes of mood. Either he would shuffle about in a state of suppressed agitation, or else would lounge around the sitting room in his dressing gown, sunk in lassitude. In this latter condition he seemed to be daydreaming, utterly oblivious to me or his surroundings.

I felt compassion for him just once when he announced to me that his mother had had to sell two ornately carved, Jacobean chairs that had been in the family for generations in order to buy a new refrigerator. He moped for a week, and I was genuinely sorry for him.

VI.

When, out of kindness, I asked Anable if he cared to accompany me to a Halloween party the 31st, he shook his head.

"I appreciate your concern for my social life, Winsor," he answered, "but I'm afraid I'm going to be busy with Harper and his friends that night. You might say we have a party of our own to attend in observance of the Hallowmas. If it turns out as I have every expectation it will, I can assure you--at long last, my dear fellow--of a complete and satisfactory explanation."

Of what, Anable did not specify--and I did not inquire further. The truth is, I had become intimidated by Anable's actions. I faced the painful fact that by now he was not in his right mind--he was already far gone in his involvement in these outlandish pursuits, and it would do no good to confront him head on. Recalling his injunction to me to help him retain his "sense of proportion," I resolved at that moment to go on Halloween to Satan's Ledge,

where surely he and his unsavory companions would be congregating, and observe their goings-on in secret. This would be a risky business to be certain, but I felt given Anable's evasiveness that I had to obtain information firsthand, assess how dangerous this evidently revived cult was to him. I no longer had confidence in his promise of revelation.

During the week prior to the 31st, Anable spent more and more time away from 973 Hale Street, presumably with his comrades in the forest hills. When I returned to the apartment after classes, he would be gone. I would be in bed asleep before he came back, his closed door in the morning the only indication he had done so. I saw him once or twice, and then fleetingly.

The day before Halloween I noticed a brown bag on the sitting room desk. Anable must have brought it in earlier that afternoon. Thinking it contained groceries, I casually looked inside. To my surprise I found a curious assortment of chemicals in glass jars as might belong to a boy's chemistry set: uniodized salt, sulphur, iron filings, compounds of cobalt, magnesium, nickel, zinc, and mercury. Among his other solitary childhood pastimes, I remembered Anable once saying that he had been passionately devoted to chemistry. Was this evidence of a resurgence of interest in that hobby? Again, I hesitated to ask.

That Wednesday around 3 when I got back from Miskatonic, Anable was pacing about the sitting room, as intensely agitated as I had ever seen him. He scarcely acknowledged my entry. "The dreams, Winsor, the magnificent dreams," he exclaimed and rushed into his room.

An hour later Anable emerged dressed in his worn winter coat and carrying his sack of chemicals. "Please bear with me," he pleaded, his brown eyes begging my understanding, as he ran out. For a second I softened and forgot my annoyance with him, overcome by a surge of pity for the fellow. I should not really blame Anable for his deplorable state--Harper and his disreputable cultists were the ones responsible. They had taken in my unworldly friend with their elaborate Cthulhu mumbo-jumbo. If I could catch them this night causing him any harm, psychological or otherwise, I would blow the whistle on them in a minute and call in the Arkham authorities. I had already confided my fears to Mrs. Anable, who agreed that her son was under bad influences.

Leaving at dusk for my party, I drove the Model J Duesenberg my father had given me for my birthday earlier in the month into Arkham center. A paper bag with cut-out eyes would serve me as a simple costume. I spent several agreeable hours drinking cider and bobbing for apples at the Zeta Psi house, then set out on the serious mission of my Halloween night.

Since it would be hopeless for me to try in the dark to follow the forest trail Anable had led me on in the summer, let alone scale the steep slope to the ledge, I decided to take the more roundabout route of my original visit there. Besides, now that I was in possession of a motorcar, distance was no obstacle. I headed inland out Miskatonic Avenue, which runs along the river, to where it hits the Bolton Road. The moon had risen, and the beams of my headlamps illuminated the autumn leaves swirling and eddying in the cold breeze. An exhilarating and magical air suffused the landscape. In high spirits from the quantity of cider I had imbibed, I approached this uncertain rendezvous free of any apprehension. It was almost a lark.

My watch showed a little past 11 by the time I parked at the picnic area.

In the moonlight, with the foliage above thinner than in warmer months, I had no trouble locating the path to Satan's Ledge. I kept to this at first, but not wishing to encounter possible sentinels, I strayed to the left and began a cautious circling movement through the woods, which were dense enough to afford adequate concealment. I was able to make my way with a minimum of stumbling as I worked up to gradually higher ground.

I was acutely aware of the noises in the brush and trees--the rustle of swaying boughs, the trickle of a distant stream, an owl hoot, a jay's cry. But soon I heard another sound, an unfamiliar one, a soft, rhythmic moaning, as if the forest itself was breathing. Ahead of me I began to catch glimpses through branches and undergrowth of flickering, bobbing points of light--but it was too late in the season for fireflies. They seemed to be receding at the same rate as I advanced. As I continued my slow, upward progress, I realized that these were flames--candle flames. As I approached nearer still, I could perceive that each candle was held by a dim human form. A half-dozen men were walking in Indian file toward Satan's Ledge--for now at last in the faint light of moon and candles I could make out the rough, Cyclopean boulders on the ledge's inner rim. I lay down behind a fallen birch trunk about thirty yards away, not daring to go closer.

The group proceeded across the rock floor of the ledge and arranged themselves very deliberately in a semi-circle in front of and facing the great easterly boulder with its graven ideographs. From my low vantage point I had an unobstructed view of this scene. All of those in this strange procession (though I could see only their backs) appeared to be elderly folk, except for one--from his hurried, stooping gait I could not mistake Anable. The air was curiously still on the ledge, the flames stirring hardly at all--and the surrounding woods now seemed unnaturally quiet, the continuous, monotonous chanting being the only sound.

Abruptly the cultists crouched down, bowed before the rock. One figure remained standing--the mass of hair and beard marked him as Harper. He moved to the center of the semi-circle, set down his candle by the boulder's base, and drew from his jacket an object that I thought at first was the mallet--but it was a pipe, for he raised it to his mouth and blew three, low, loathsome notes. The others ceased their moronic chanting instantly in response. Harper next pulled from his jacket a small, glittering container, and started methodically to march around behind the huddled group and scatter a powdery substance from it with his fingertips. Soon emptying its contents, he withdrew another and repeated the process, and so for several jars until he had covered the length of the semi-circle and enclosed the band from one edge of the great boulder to the other. Thus were the chemicals Anable had purchased put to use.

Done with this seemingly pointless ritual, Harper rejoined the congregants, squatting down with them at one end of their semi-circle. They then raised their heads in unison to the rock and commenced to pour out, as if reading the blasphemous glyphs, an uncouth string of syllables in a language that not only bore no relation to English but to no sane human tongue on this planet. "Cthulhu fhtagn" they recited over and over.

With the cry of "Iä, Iä, Shub-Niggurath" an indescribably foetid odor swept down upon me from the direction of the ledge. I almost swooned as I closed my eyes in disgust. My nausea stemmed not only from the ghastly

stench itself, but from the sudden remembrance of Anable's description of certain events outlined in Clarke's monograph. Here these crazed cultists --and my brash friend--were reenacting an unholy ceremony of the sort practiced fifty years ago on this spot! I trembled, no longer the bold spy of a short time before.

I had barely mastered my nausea, the vile odor having passed within moments, when I opened my eyes to see, atop the graven boulder, a shrouded human figure--who must have scaled the rock from behind and emerged in the instant I had shut them. A great wind had sprung up and whistled and howled around this apparition, blowing his immaculate white robe in billows and nearly extinguishing the flames of the candles of the worshippers clustered below him. Emanating a brilliant glow of purest white, this luminous, lithe-limbed being glided down the nearly vertical granite face of the ledge floor, while the hideous glyphs burned a dark red as if reflecting his radiance. I could clearly discern his dazzling features--he was smooth-faced, delicately boned, and boyish, with the almond eyes of an antique pharaoh. From his crown luxuriant, silken, gold hair flowed as if electrically charged. I was more in awe than frightened--indeed overcome by the unearthly beauty of this personage. I was transfixed.

One of the crouched celebrants rose--it was Anable--and approached this exquisite, god-like creature. Harper and the rest remained prostrate. Anable knelt before him and raised his face and clasped his hands in supplication. The gorgeous youth began to speak, to murmur to Anable, but the wind had built to such a frantic pitch that I could catch nothing, though I believe he was using English. After communing with Anable for what seemed like aeons, he bent over and embraced and enveloped my friend in his waving folds. They blended into one writhing, amorphous mass, Anable invisible in the voluminous robe--then they almost poured back to the graven rock and began effortlessly to ascend its steep face.

At this point I could endure it no longer. I lurched forward from my hiding place and ran screaming, "Anable! Oh, Howard! Watch out!" Perhaps emboldened by my liquor, perhaps driven by some mad, selfless instinct, I hastened to try to save my chum. Damn the risk! What had I to fear after all from a half-dozen old people, whom I could fast outrun if need be? As for the fragile fellow who had swallowed up my friend, I was suddenly overwhelmed with rage and hatred for him. I didn't know whether to kiss it or kill it! All that mattered was rescuing my companion from his willowy clutches.

Incredibly I succeeded in my immediate attempt to cause disruption. The celebrants turned around in bewilderment, then hurried to their feet, extinguishing their tapers, and raced off in panic into the woods as I charged them, brandishing a stout birch limb and wearing my paper bag mask for added effect. The white-robed youth hesitated, then lowered the inert form of my friend gently to the rock floor, finally mounting the boulder again and swiftly disappearing over its top edge--he would have a difficult climb down the steep slope beyond.

Only Harper of the fleeing cultists paused. "Curse you, boy," he belted. "You've spoiled his initiation. Woe be to you, my lad!" Then he slipped with the rest into darkness.

Guided by the moonlight, I rushed to where Anable lay prone on the rock.

He was stunned and babbling: "The Great Old Ones . . . Cthulhu's Ledge . . . I was so close . . . Azathoth." Sheer nonsense, of course.

Frightened that the Cthulhuists might regroup and come after us once recovering from their surprise, I hoisted Anable to his feet, first ascertaining that he was in no pain. To my relief I found him ambulatory and was able to lead him by the path quickly back to the picnic grounds and the safety of my Model J.

During the frenzied drive back to Arkham, Anable continued his wild mutterings. At first incoherent, he abruptly began to speak in lucid sentences, albeit rapidly with a terrific intensity, his brown eyes glazed.

"Yes, Winsor, I have met the Old Ones' avatar . . . who told me of marvels beyond the galling limitations of time and space as we conceive of them. I learned where Henri Rousseau had obtained his models for the jungle creatures in that curious and unsettling painting of his, 'The Children of the Kingdom.' And the primitive tribes of Guatemala and the Dutch East Indies archipelago are not the only repositories of secrets that would drive the mass of mankind mad if they were known. The woods of New Jersey, just a few miles from the Pest Zone euphemistically called New York City, contain creeping, insidious, eldritch horror, which threatens at any moment to erupt and spew over the land (a result I wouldn't mind seeing if it meant the destruction of that hateful burg). Nor even are the Connecticut suburbs safe. . . .

"I learned, too, of those dark and dangerous forces that flop and flounder at the galaxy's rim. . . . This goes infinitely beyond man's feeble morality. We're no more significant than the lowest bacterial scum in the larger scheme of the universe. The Old Ones have spared us worthless wretches so far because we count for so little. They may appear 'malign,' but are in fact indifferent--except to the occasional exceptional individual, to whom They may give the opportunity for the realization of and participation in the awesome secrets of time and space. There is a chance for human transcendence. Many hear the call, but few will heed it and be chosen. Iâ! Iâ! Shub-Nigurath, the Goat with a Thousand Young!"

At this last burst of insanity Anable trailed off again into gibberish, only to cry a minute later: "Oh but, Winsor, you fool! So much more could I have found out, unimaginable wonders, if you hadn't interrupted. Damn you!" With this imprecation he lapsed into permanent silence, slumped down in the seat beside me. His lack of gratitude stung, but I could hardly judge him harshly in the circumstances. Surely now it was essential that he sever all ties with Harper and company, who had brought him to this woeful condition.

Barely conscious and able to walk, Anable with my help staggered up the stairs and into his room where I eased him onto his bed. Thank God our dreadful Halloween night was over.

VII.

Anable spent the next several weeks in a state of utter collapse. Naturally, the morning after our harrowing misadventure at Satan's Ledge, I notified Mrs. Anable that her son had taken seriously ill, sparing her the worst of the details. She arranged for the family doctor to come examine him at the apartment as soon as possible. Dr. MacDonald could find no signs of physical injury, but in light of my guarded account concluded that Anable

must have suffered some kind of severe nervous shock that had rendered him powerless. When after two days Anable did regain consciousness, he was too weak to speak or get about on his own. It was clear that he could no longer remain at 973 Hale Street. With the aid of stalwart Dr. MacDonald, I succeeded in transferring Anable in my vehicle to his family's Valley Street home. Mrs. Delisio, tearfully watching the doctor and me carry the patient outside, remarked what a pity that such a polite, mannerly young man should be so grievously afflicted.

Mrs. Anable was reluctant to call in the authorities, but she worried about the cultists who had harmed her son lurking still in the woods, and requested that I and some friends scout around the Satan's Ledge area. A week after Halloween, I persuaded three classmates--Messrs. Hailblum, Sullivan, and Klein--to accompany me on a "bird walk" (such was my excuse) during the day to see if Harper and company were around or not. In the course of our bird sighting, I discovered no trace of human habitation other than discarded garbage. Perhaps with the onset of colder weather they had dispersed, returning to their places of origin. Nevertheless, a clever woodsman like Harper could easily evade detection and survive the winter outdoors if he had to. Mrs. Anable was relieved to hear my report that they had apparently pulled up stakes and departed.

I visited Anable at least once a week during his confinement at home. Sitting by his bedside, I filled him in on campus news and the progress of my courses--careful not to mention the cult or Satan's Ledge or the disturbing doings Halloween night. Though capable of speaking for brief intervals (according to his mother), Anable chose to keep silent at these interviews. Indeed, he often closed his eyes, as if overcome by weariness, and turned his head to the wall away from me. When his luminous brown eyes were open, they seemed to stare at me, as if with--could it be?--resentment. I was generous not to take this as a personal slight, but rather attributed it to the grave mental strain he had undergone, perhaps coupled with a resumption of that natural reserve that shut out even his best friend.

Anable's physical health did improve steadily, however, and he regained sufficient strength to walk unassisted by the end of November. By early December he could leave the house on short trips. But, having a constitutional aversion to cold weather, aggravated by his present weakened condition, Anable could not remain outside for very long. This was one fortunate complication, for he had begun to express a desire to revisit the ledge, so Mrs. Anable confided to me. She did not wish him to return to the scene of his traumatic experience, and made me promise to do everything in my power to prevent him from doing so.

His mental state, alas, did not change much for the better. Anable continued to be withdrawn and apathetic--as if he had expended all the tremendous nervous energy that had been building within him since summer in one shot that Halloween night, with none left to sustain him for the rest of the year. The dean of the university showed his understanding when he allowed Anable to take incompletes in his fall subjects, at no penalty to his scholarship status.

When I returned to Arkham following the Christmas vacation, I was pleased to find that Anable had resumed residence in our Hale Street apartment. His greeting was effusive, yet somehow perfunctory, lacking the

warmth of previous reunions. At least he was displaying more liveliness.

"Ah, Winsor," he exclaimed, "trust you enjoyed the holidays. Happy 1929! Dr. MacDonald has judged me well enough to get back to my studies at Miskatonic--which I can tell you I'm eager to do. An invalid's existence is a terrific bore.

"As for the cult business, let me put your mind to rest on all that. You needn't feel anxious for me any more. I realize now I was fooling with forces that no person with his wits about him should ever get mixed up in. I'd become so immersed in arcane lore, shall we say, that I'd lost all perspective--just as I warned you I might. I have to admit you were correct to be suspicious of Harper. He was luring me into the midst of a sinister 'cosmic conspiracy'--but you showed up out of the blue and saved me in the nick of time. I'm through with it now for good, believe me. I'll not bring up the subject again--and I'll appreciate it if you won't say anything about it either. Let's forget about it. It's in the past."

So, instead of a truthful explanation of what he had been involved in, Anable gave me this assurance of his reform. Well, by this point I knew more than I cared to about this Cthulhu cult and was satisfied that it was all a lot of mysterious, mystical claptrap that had dazzled and misguided my friend. I was content to let the matter drop, hopeful that this was indeed the end of it.

Unsteady on his feet as he still was, Anable was nonetheless able to get to and from classes on his own via the trolley. He applied himself more dutifully to his studies than in the first term, yet I sensed his heart was not really in his work. On more than one occasion I caught him gazing out the sitting room window toward Satan's Ledge. And more than once, I suspect, he attempted to walk to the ledge by the direct, steep route--but the ice and snow must have thwarted him. When he asked me to drive him to the picnic area off the Bolton Road, I refused. He glared at me for a second, then subsided into a disappointed sulk. Unwilling, I suppose, to appear too keen on the idea of a return journey, he never brought it up again.

As the bleak winter term wore on, Anable made less and less of an effort to be sociable. Listless for long stretches, he also displayed at times a certain restlessness. He gave up all pretense of making conversation, except on the most mundane, essential topics. "Pass the salt" was about the most he would say to Mrs. Delisio or me. I forbore, more sorrowed than angered by his rude behavior. Obviously he had far to go mentally before complete recovery. Despite my protests, he continued to read those trashy, evil books by Chambers, Bierce, and others.

Then in February the dreams came. I began to hear him crying out unintelligibly in his sleep. After one particularly bad night he appeared looking extremely haggard--and yet oddly exhilarated, his eyes flashing with a light I had not seen since before his collapse. When I probed him, he admitted that "distressing" dreams had caused him to sleep fitfully, but his elated expression seemed to belie this notion that they had been in any way distressing. He would not comment on the content of these dreams.

One night late in the month, after returning from a rush party at the Kappa Sig house, I could hear Anable through his bedroom door talking in his sleep. Pressing my ear to the door, I could make out the following snatches. "He promises to come again . . . Satan's Ledge too far . . . must try one more time . . . I cannot fail Him . . . He shall not fail me . . .

chant the Dhol formula . . . Nyarlathotep. . . ."

I was profoundly alarmed to recognize the sorts of words and phrases he had not mouthed since our delirious ride back to Arkham that Halloween night. At last I had to face the fact that Anable's derangement was more serious and lasting than I had guessed. A doctor who specialized in mental disorders would probably have to be consulted soon. But events moved too swiftly for me to act--and, in retrospect, I doubt if it would have affected the ultimate tragic outcome.

The unfortunate climax, when it came, did not catch me entirely off guard. Since Anable had abandoned even an outward show of normality, I was prepared to act forcefully if I had to.

It was a chilly winter evening, a Thursday, with no sign in the air of the forthcoming spring, that I sat on the sofa checking over my notes for a paper on Shadwell's use of irony. Vacation was only a week away. I was feeling quite relaxed after Mrs. Delisio's delicious spaghetti dinner. Anable had retired to his room, from where shortly he emerged wearing his heavy overcoat.

"I'm going out, Winsor--into town, to my mother's," he announced.

I offered to give him a lift in my motor. He declined. I insisted on leaving with him, seeing him to the trolley stop. Grudgingly he allowed me to accompany him outside. When we reached the street he turned the wrong way--north toward 127 and the woods. I hurried after him as he broke into a run on the slippery pavement. I easily overtook him in his semi-debilitated condition. When he ignored my command to halt, I had no recourse but to seize him and wrestle him gently into a drift at the side of the road.

"I must get out tonight . . . I must break through the Gate . . . I must merge with Him . . . leave me alone," he panted as we struggled.

When Anable recognized the futility of further resistance, I let him up and he reluctantly returned with me to the house. We were both soaked from rolling around in the wet snow--it was lunacy to stay out any longer with the temperature falling sharply. Anable was wheezing, gasping for breath.

Ignoring his imprecations against me, I assured him that it was in his best interest not to go to the ledge considering his poor health in this weather at this time of night. Anable, furious, stormed into his room and slammed the door. I kept vigil in the sitting room to near midnight, then went to bed myself.

I did not know what time it was when I awoke (I could not see my alarm in the dark), but I soon realized what the cause of my waking up had been--a high wind that rattled the panes had blown over the trash cans in the yard beneath my window. The wind sounded louder than it should--as if its source were from within the building. I stumbled out into the sitting room to investigate. Judging by the great whistling noise coming from Anable's room I concluded that he had to have his window wide open.

Above the whine, which was like no natural wind I had ever heard, I could distinguish a high-pitched but forceful voice behind Anable's door that I knew could not be my roommate's.

"You know, Howard Anable, that the New England world you have loved and cherished from birth is only the sum of the marvelous sunset cities you have gazed upon (from a height) in your dreams. These have you yearned for with such keen frustration all your years. Ancient Arkham, insular Inns-

mouth, rumour-shadowed Kingsport, Boston and its ghoul-infested North End, Providence and its jewellers' conventions, these are but ephemeral transcriptions of the real places you have so far only dimly glimpsed--basalt-towered Dylath-Leen, Kled with its perfumed jungles, the Plateau of Leng, Yith, Cyclopean and many-columned Y'ha-nthlei. Your longing for your great-great-grandfather's Greek Revival mansion with its widow's walk and Ionic pilasters is really a longing for a certain windowless, onyx pharos on nighted Yuggoth. When you wish to don small clothes and periwig you are in truth desiring to wear the unhuman trappings, the extravagant golden tiaras and armlets of the Deep Ones. . . . Soon, Howard Anable, soon you can wander in the Vaults of Zin, and consort with ghosts and Gugs."

Someone--some madman--had plainly clambered up from the yard below into Anable's window! Had Harper or one of his cult cohorts returned? I switched on the lamp on the end table. Looking out the sitting room window I could see that Mrs. Delisio had turned on the light illuminating the backyard.

"I am the Gate," continued the wailing voice. "The Gate stands open, ready to receive you. Dare you enter? Come, come now. . . ."

I had had enough of listening to this mad drivel. I knocked on Anable's door, then tried to open it and found that some heavy object--possibly the bed--blocked it. I threw my shoulder repeatedly against the door, but it budged not an inch. The wind had increased its daemonic scream--I could no longer make out that piping voice whose youthful owner I now knew, only the thuds of books and furniture striking the floor.

With a strength born of frantic frenzy, I burst through as whatever was behind the door gave way. I was immediately overwhelmed by a loathsome stench, which caused me to reel back in nausea--but not before I saw a large, white, flowing, viscous mass leap through and shatter the upper panes of the sash window. The flying shards of glass miraculously missed me, as I dashed forward into Anable's empty, suddenly odor free room--to the damaged window. I looked down, expecting to see Anable and his abductor in a heap in the yard below. But the only person visible was Mrs. Delisio in her dressing gown and shawl, rushing out the backdoor at the sound of that final crash of glass and wood. Below the window, other than the toppled trash cans and debris, there was nothing on the ground! In the next moment I looked up--looked up toward Satan's Ledge--looked up into a winter's sky that was alive with motion in unimagined space filled with transcendent whiteness. In utter stillness.

VIII.

Understandably, I did not linger in that house of horror. I spent the rest of that night and the next at Miskatonic in the dorm suite of Messrs. Haiblum, Sullivan, and Klein. I remained in Arkham only for as long as I had to, to calm Mrs. Delisio (who had apparently not witnessed that last, soul-blasting vision in the sky), to speak with Mrs. Anable and to the police, suggesting the theory that Anable had been spirited off by the cult members into the hills and possibly beyond. There was no keeping the authorities out of the matter this time. As already stated, I withdrew to Boston for the remainder of the term, arranging to take my exams after vacation. I spent

the bulk of my vacation time composing the above narrative.

There is one more thing. In April when I returned to Arkham, I visited Mrs. Delisio to settle my affairs with her. She had already agreed to terminating my lease short of the appointed year, and I wished to pay her some fair compensation. (Insurance had covered the damaged window.) After negotiations had been concluded as affably as possible under the solemn circumstances, she gave me a sealed envelope that she had found among Anable's effects before their removal. It had my name on it, and contained a hastily scribbled note.

3/15/29

Winsor [it began]:

By the time you read this I'll be far beyond your meddling reach. Despite your best efforts to interfere I should soon be riding through the intergalactic void on the back of a hypopencephalic centipede, frolicking with night-gaunts and ghouls--or some such. I regret you won't be joining me here, as in fact you aren't worthy to transcend the mundane human world--the mundane human world whose economy within a few months, it's been my privilege to learn from Him, is in for a difficult period. You and your kind are going to suffer, and I can't say I feel very sorry for you. Enjoy what will probably prove to be your last summer on the island. Be forewarned that hard times lie ahead.

Yrs. --HWA

Thus read Howard Wentworth Anable's last--and certainly most unfathomable--communication to me and to the world; the final testament of a once noble mind stolen away from its rightful place among men by a cosmic evil that surely deserves, as I trust my pitiful account has demonstrated, the epithet, "the madness out of space."

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COMING SOON

News about Dagon, a fanzine from Great Britain entirely devoted to the Lovecraftian role-playing game "Call of Cthulhu."

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One year's subscription (8 issues) costs \$28 in the USA and Canada, \$36 in Western Europe, and \$38.50 in Australia. Pay in U. S. Funds and indicate first issue.

R'lyeh Review

Frank Belknap Long, Autobiographical Memoir. Necronomicon Press (101 Lockwood Street, West Warwick, RI 02893). 32 pp. \$4.95.

(Reviewed by Dabney Hoskins)

Fans of Frank Belknap Long will welcome this genial new "autobiographical memoir" by one of the most distinguished figures in the field of imaginative literature. Anecdotal and impressionistic, it is written in the form of a "fireside chat." Long provides glimpses of his childhood and of such legendary friends as HPL, Sam Loveman, H. Warner Munn, and James F. Morton; some theoretical analysis of the SF genre; a delightfully fanciful conversation with Lovecraft on an "astral phone communicator"; and some striking examples of synchronicity in his life. Readers expecting basic biographical facts may be disappointed. For information on such subjects as Long's family, his education, and his own writing career, they should turn to his introduction in The Early Long and to Dreamer on the Nightside. In his self-serving afterword (much of it amounts to a plug for his novella Pulptime), Peter Cannon explains Long's reticence as modesty, and underlines the great importance of friendship to him, which is what this warm memoir is mainly about.

Like the complete Sonia Davis memoir also published by Necronomicon Press, this in essence is a kind of original document. The editor has shown good judgment in preserving all of Long's stylistic charm, including his asides on space limitations. Less to the editor's credit is

the annoying typo "dome" for "come," and it would be nice to know whether the name of Otis Adelbert Kline's beach house was The Midge or The Madge. These and other minor errors, however, can be corrected readily enough in a second printing.

ELDRITCH TALES #11

Hot off the presses with more mind-warping material by your favorite scary scribes: "Snarker's Son" by Brian Lumley, "Snail Ghost" by Will Murray, "Night Bus" by Donald R. Burleson, to name a few. Art by luminaries of loathsomeness including Jason C. Eckhardt, Jim Garrison, Allen Koszowski, Dave Carson, and Dennis Tiani. Send your \$6 to: Crispin Burnham
1051 Wellington Road
Lawrence, KS 66044

ATTENTION REH FANS!

Weren't we at Cryptic Publications supposed to be publishing more manuscripts by Robert E. Howard? Yes, indeed we were. And indeed we are! it won't be long before The Adventures of Lal Singh by Robert E. Howard hits the stands (so to speak). And there's plenty more where that came from! Stay tuned!

MAIL-CALL OF CTHULHU

In Crypt #32, p. 40, Don Herron finds it "weird" that in Lovecraft I said nothing about Sam Loveman's homosexuality. I did not speak of it because, first, when I wrote the book Loveman was alive (he answered my letter of inquiry); and, second, I had no evidence beyond the casual remarks by a couple of my sources that Loveman was "probably" homosexual. I had nothing in print that I could quote. Before making such a statement about a living person, one should be sure that one's evidence would stand up in court. Besides, it would have been a poor return for his kindness in answering my query.

I was also informed that Loveman had been briefly but, according to his letter to me, happily married in his youth until the young woman died. Therefore, as far as my evidence went, Loveman might, like others I have known, have been a man of normal sexuality but suspected of deviation because of effeminate or mincing mannerisms acquired in childhood. The same might be said of Lovecraft.

Lovecraft's attitude towards sexually peculiar friends and correspondents (Barlow, Crane, and Derleth among others) paralleled that towards non-Anglo-Saxon ethnics. In the abstract, he detested sexual deviants as much as he did Jews, Negroes, and Latins. But when he met an individual of these classes, if the person used him with reasonable courtesy and friendliness, he was so delighted at being treated as a fellow human being that he was ready, willing, and eager to overlook the unfortunate category into which his new acquaintance fitted.

In later life, by the way, the

"mainstream villain" Edmund Wilson became interested in Lovecraft as an individual and wrote a play, The Little Blue Light, with a major character obviously modeled on Lovecraft.

Shoggothily,
L. Sprague deCamp
Villanova, PA

I've read the entire issue [Crypt #32] pronto -- rather hard not to, since all the stuff is interesting, and remarkably unified, to icebergs as well as to HPL. I was a mite disappointed that STJ didn't come up with actual hidden political references HPL may have been making -- not that I believe he actually was doing that, but that your introductory notes appeared to imply such. However, I was still awed by STJ's incredible researching -- his information came from a resolution of numerous Lovecraftian writings, fused into a remarkable whole.

I wish Pete Cannon had written more, for I liked it very much; we agree at times and disagree at others. Skoal. Clearly, we were each very impressed with the brief HPL novel, and I hope readers who have not gotten around to the piece will quickly hasten to do so.

Yet another chum is at hand, Don Herron, author of two superlative Bay City books, his Dashiell Hammett tour and his new Literary Sites in San Francisco -- a superlative book, fascinating for the SanFran lover and also for anyone who has never had the opportunity to visit -- and love -- that beautiful city. Sam Loveman may have been a homosexual, as Don notes, but it wasn't that which destroyed his friendship with

HPL; he was painfully aware of some dreadfully snide antisemitic comments he overheard, and point-blank the relationship was finished. I suspect HPL felt bad when Sam cold-shouldered him, and maybe wished he had kept his lantern-jaw shut, but it was too late. It often is.

I felt sympathy for Duane Rimel, whose poetry was used without his knowledge, although it is nice to know one's words are not so ephemeral after all. Lin Carter once used a quote by me, over my name, on the back cover of a paperback, which astonished me no end when I discovered the usage--I no longer even recalled saying those words! (I had, however, a good two decades earlier.) When, a few years later I met the redoubtable Carter, and asked him the why and wherefore, he raised an eyebrow, and told me not to complain, as, after all, he had made me "famous." Sic transit gloria mundi.

--Ben P. Indick
Teaneck, NJ

I found Will Murray's "The Trouble with Shoggoths" very interesting; he is certainly right in seeing the shoggoths first appearing in Lovecraft as early as "The Mound," or even (nebulously) in "The Call of Cthulhu"; although I am not convinced that the mention of "shapeless & gigantic amphibia" in "The Round Tower" is a reference to the shoggoths--this description is simply too vague, and shapelessness (which Lovecraft evidently felt to be a very unnerving quality) is common to many of Lovecraft's monsters.

There are some other problems, however, with the article. First, the word "shoggoth" is never capitalized in Lovecraft; it was capitalized in At the Mountains of Madness because of the "crazy style sheet" (as Lovecraft once referred to it) of Astound-

ing Stories, and the proper lower-case reading (found in both the manuscript and the typescript) has never been restored until my new edition of At the Mountains of Madness and Other Novels (Arkham House). "Shoggoth" is a species name like "zoor" or "gug," which are also (or ought to be) not capitalized. More importantly, I am not certain what Will means when he says the shoggoths are not frightening. This cannot be a statement of fact, since fright is a purely subjective response which will differ from person to person. I was personally very frightened when I read At the Mountains of Madness for the first time, and I still feel a shudder when I re-read it now; indeed, I don't know whether there is any passage in all literature which I have found more frightening than Chapter 10 of this novel. But this too is not a statement of fact but a subjective response. How many others have been frightened by the shoggoths, I do not know; I am simply sorry Will is not.

--S. T. Joshi
Joisey City, Noo Joisey

Many thanks for Crypt #32, which I greatly enjoyed, At the Mountains of Madness being perhaps my favorite HPL tale, or at least a close second to "The Shadow out of Time." I especially liked S. T. Joshi's long article. . . . I agree with S. T. that it's hard to believe that the human dwellers in K'n-yan originally came from the stars. The way I figure it, their ancestors were originally servitors of star-beings who came to earth (perhaps those who later withdrew to red-litten Yoth or black, lightless N'kai?) and later incorporated fragments of those beings' history into their own origin-legends. The theological mind can always find a way. I'm a bit surprised that Love-

craft didn't spell it out that way rather than just vaguely suggesting. Maybe he figured readers were getting too sophisticated to suppose that humans could independently evolve on other worlds; if so, he gave credit where it was not (and still isn't) due. The term "parallel evolution" used to be used as a rationale in SF for the innumerable races of extraterrestrial humanoids in the genre; that term now seems to be forgotten, but it's still taken for granted in popular SF that humans can occur on other planets or even in "a galaxy far, far away." Still, if such humanoids were prohibited in SF it would spoil as much fun as prohibiting time-travel or hyperspace-flight, no doubt.

--Richard L. Tierney
Mason City, IA

Crypt #32 was a lot of fun. I'm still reading through it. Herron's "Fun Guys" installment was fascinating. Actually, I don't see much difference between Peter Cannon's Madness article and Ben Indick's. Both seem to make it clear that Madness is not an explicit sequel to Pym.

One quibble: somehow, between my sending corrections to my "Trouble with Shoggoths" article and the typesetter, my footnotes got mixed up. The place in the text footnoted #1 should not be so footnoted. Footnote #2 in the text should refer to footnote #1 in the end notes. (I.e., my point was that the white thing being worshipped by Night-Gaunts in "The Call of Cthulhu" might possibly be a proto-Shoggoth.) And footnote #2 in the end notes is a reference to my paragraph about the Shoggoths having grown slowly in HPL's mind prior to his writing Madness, which is not footnoted.

--Will Murray
North Quincy, MA

Really, I would never have imagined getting so much consistent pleasure from any "zine."

--Eric Kramer
New York, NY

Crypt of Cthulhu has grown from being a magazine of excellent quality to a magazine of superb quality--congratulations for your achievement.

--Rodolfo A. Ferraresi
North Brunswick, NJ

Just a quick note on Crypt of Cthulhu #32, on Pym. Way back when I had a course on Poe in college, my professor had an interesting idea about the mysterious white at the end . . . he thought it was the sails of the ship, the Penguin. (I don't remember where he got the idea, but it wasn't his to begin with.) There is a good deal of textual proof --for example, at one point in the book, the narrator says he's going to refer to penguins again, and never does. What better reference than the ship, the Penguin? (I'm convinced.) Alas, this takes the book out of the fantastic realm, except for all the time distortion involved. (Try adding up the hours Pym spends in the ship's hold during the mutiny . . .)

An interesting issue. Keep at it!

--John Betancourt
Moorestown, NJ

I must say, Crypt of Cthulhu #32 is the most enjoyable issue you've concocted in the last, oh, year or so! At the Mountains of Madness has always ranked high on my HPL favorites list, so this edition of Crypt was something very special for me. I especially liked Will Murray's piece on "The Trouble with Shoggoths," which helped me understand a bit better why the "monstrous climax" of At the Mountains of Madness al-

ways seemed somehow anticlimactic!

I hope you have planned other special issues which, like Crypt #32, will be devoted exclusively to other HPL "monsterpieces," sometime in the future.

Your "R'Iyeh Review" continues to be an indispensable section each issue. I hope you don't mind my saying that which you've doubtless heard hundreds of times before--but . . . nevertheless . . . Crypt is excellent "as is," and yet, somehow, manages to get better and better with succeeding issues!

I wanted to comment on Peter Gilmore's letter in "Mail-Call" in #32. Mr. Gilmore is correct in pointing out Ralph E. Vaughan's misrepresentations of Anton LaVey and LaVey's "Church of Satan," in Vaughan's "Believers in Lovecraft" [Crypt #30] piece. However, something bizarre happened to LaVey's Church of Satan, sometime in the mid-1970s, as I recall. I am assuming here that letter-writer Peter Gilmore knows a bit more about the Church than most others, and if that is a correct assumption, perhaps he can respond with additional information that may help to uncover some heretofore "unilluminated mysteries" re the Church of Satan.

As I was about to say in the preceding paragraph--somewhere in the mid-(or was it late-?) 70s there was a kind of "uprising" against LaVey by "Lucifer's Minions," when LaVey decided to introduce a written "test" which would enable members of the I^o rank, by virtue of a passing grade, to elevate themselves to Witch or Warlock rank of the II^o. (Prior to the introduction of this so-called "test," the Church of Satan elevated its membership's degree-rank via other, seemingly more realistic ways.) Thus, when LaVey decided

II^o ranks could be virtually "bought and sold," the uproar began and the Church of Satan lost most of its constituency, who "turned in their badges," as it were, and set out to create their own version of LaVey's satanic bylaws (set down in his Satanic Bible) within the context of a new, uncorrupted, highly-structured organization entitled the Temple of Set.

Now, as far as I ever knew, LaVey and his Church of Satan "fell by the wayside," because when the Church's constituency left, nearly everyone left, and so LaVey was left with nothing of which to speak. However, Mr. Gilmore's letter suggests that he knows a bit more than the average person when it comes to Anton LaVey and the Church of Satan. And so I wondered--does Peter Gilmore know whatever really happened to LaVey? And if he does . . . is he talking . . . ?

Beast Witches . . . !

--Randy Palmer
Arlington, VA

I'm looking forward to the critics-as-fictioneers issue and the Ramsey Campbell issue.

Crypt is, as always, wonderful.

Speaking of wonderful, I'd like to see something more about that sense of wonder in Lovecraft. Mr. Mosig's pieces were very illuminating, and well written. However, I think Colin Wilson is right in claiming that Lovecraft's characters ought to have been fascinated not terrified by such revelations as they experience in "Shadow out of Time" and At the Mountains of Madness. His literary capacity to create the feeling of vastness, beauty, or strangeness seems to me to not necessarily be a result of his stated philosophic intent.

--Michael J. Lotus
Chicago, IL

I am happy to report that I now have the complete series of Crypt issues (1-33) thanks to your back issue reprints and to Soft Books of Toronto. Alas, I have not read all 33 yet--unfortunately, my reading material acquisition rate has long ago surpassed my consumption of the printed word--no speed reader am I. There are stacks of novels, anthologies and magazines I am working my way through but I must say that Crypt remains refreshingly unique offering intellectual insights, literary treats of the fantastic and macabre, humor, art, criticism and debate, news and personal anecdotes. I hope to collect and read 33 more and then some.

I saw the plug that Karl Edward Wagner gave to you and Crypt in his

recent issue of The Year's Best Horror Stories: Series XII (DAW Books). Congrats! Is there a Who's Who for the Horror Hall of Fame?

--Richard A. Zotara
Cheektowaga, NY

I receive a number of fanzines and yours is among the best. The articles in Crypt are excellent. One of my favorite things is that it comes out so regularly. Keep up the good work.

--Michael F. Albertini
Richland, WA

I always look forward to relaxing with a new Crypt each month (five-sided stone star always nearby).

--Carlos Waldraven
Dallas, GA

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NEXT TIME . . .

Just what the heck is the "Cthulhu Mythos" anyway? We do so much squawking about it here at Crypt, you'd think we'd know. Well, as it happens, we do have a few ideas. But there's a surprising amount of debate on the question. Do stories "belong to" the Mythos (if so, which ones?), or merely "utilize" it, or what? How much of the Mythos is Lovecraft's invention, and how much of the conception do we owe to August Derleth? Is the whole thing so foreign to HPL's thought that we ought to differentiate between the "Lovecraft Mythos" or "Yog-Sothoth Cycle of Myth" and the "Cthulhu Mythos"? Or what? These are some of the issues we'll be exploring in the next issue, with articles like these:

"H. P. Lovecraft and the Cthulhu Mythos" by Robert M. Price

"The Question of Shub-Niggurath" by Rodolfo Ferraresi

"Narrathoth, the Forgotten" by Will Murray

"The Fan Mythos" by Randall D. Larson

"The Cthulhu Mythology" by Francis T. Laney

"The Mantle of Graag" by Paul Dennis LaVond